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TRIBE-CASTE-CLASS ENCOUNTERS

SOME ASPECTS OF FOLK-URBAN RELATIONS IN ALIRAJPUR TEHSIL

G S AURORA

Administrative Staff College of India
HYDERABAD

Gurdip Singh Aurora (1931)
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This book is dedicated to my **gurus** *of Sociology and Social Anthropology*

M N Srinivas	**M Freedman**
A Tropp	**S Cotgrove**

PREFACE

Bhilalas of Alirajpur are included in the category "Bhils and related tribes". The present study is based on an extensive and intensive field work in the region (Alirajpur) where the Bhilalas dominate numerically. The book does not focus on the ethnographic picture of the Bhilalas. Its focus is on a number of theoretical problems. In my effort to answer these problems I have used and synthesised a number of conceptual models. Let me present these briefly in the following few paragraphs.

Are Bhilalas tribal? This question leads to another. To what extent are they different from the caste-Hindu communities in terms of their social structure and culture? This question prods me to investigate the concepts of the acculturation-syndrome, such as, sanskritisation, universalisation and parochialisation. Behind these concepts are the more general concepts of the continuum-syndrome, namely, rural-urban and caste-tribe continuum. I find that the continuum concepts are useful to explain diffusion of culture traits from central to peripheral social systems; they do not, however, explain the discontinuities between these. To explain discontinuities one has to look at the internally determined configuration of culture traits.

Soon as we begin to talk of "patterns and configurations" of culture rather than objective "traits", we are already concerned with problems of "structure". Can we give structural interpretation of the continuum concepts? At this stage Bailey's use of the Durkheimien concepts—segmentary and organic solidarities come in handy. Could we not say that Bhilalas are a segmentary solidarity and have a higher degree of "tribal consciousness" as compared to the urban *jatis*? However, even the urban *jatis* have a degree of "tribal consciousness". The difference between the two, therefore, is a matter of degree. It is obvious that the

concepts of "caste", tribe and even class cannot be used to denote exclusive traits of a traditional Indian category. The basic problem, therefore, is not to categorise communities according to their being of one type or another but rather to show the dynamics of interrelation between them. From this point onwards the basic problem of the study becomes different.

Bhilalas are a rural community in interaction with other rural communities. They are also a part of the regional socio-political set-up. The foci of the sub-regional and regional communities are the commercial villages and politico-commercial towns. How could one draw a model of relationships between communities at various levels? During the course of the study, Julien Steward's concept of levels of socio-cultural integration and Betty Starr's concept of community levels helped me to evolve a model of the Bhilala tribal's integration at different levels of the regional community. I observed that at different levels of community-existence different kinds of "idioms of culture" (or structural concepts) were dominant. At the local levels, where a Bhilala was in interaction with his neighbours, affines and agnates, the kinship idiom was dominant. At the sub-regional level where the interaction was with other castes, "bargain" and "conventional contracts" were dominant; at the higher regional levels the political idioms, namely, the Raja, the party leader, the administrative heads and the institution of elections assumed greater importance. However, I must note the fact that the tribal was less involved with the regional level as compared to the urban castes. Incidentally, viewing the tribal in the framework of ascending levels of community made the problems arising from rural-urban continuity and dichotomy, some what irrelevant. I could see the rural and the urban systems separate at one level and united into a single rural-urban system at a higher, regional level of analysis.

The structure of the work reflects my theoretical pre-occupation. Data are presented in such a manner as to allow the theoretical model to emerge along with the richness of sociological facts.

In the second chapter, a socio-cultural and eco-demographic picture of the Bhil region is painted in bold strokes. The third chapter shows Alirajpur tehsil as a very real community not only because of its being administrative entity but also as a historical entity. The tribals within the tehsil are shown to be linked with each other not only through networks of agnatic and affinal linkages but also through the institution of the weekly *hats*.

The first three chapters of part II describe the local level of the tribal community. The description is given in terms of the three axes of life, most relevant at the primary or local level of the community, namely, the territorial, the kinship and the economic.

The next three chapters demonstrate the progressive emergence of the tribal community at the regional level through the extension of the political, economic and the cultural frontiers. The core of the regional culture is located in the urban centres within the region. In these chapters my effort is to demonstrate not only the existing networks of linkages between the central (town) and the peripheral (village) elements but also the processes of change at the village level as a result of the interactions between the two.

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It is customary to remember those individuals and groups who contribute to the fulfilment of a prolonged effort, such as the writing of a thesis or a book. It is indeed with pleasure and gratefulness that I think of the individuals whom I can name and other individuals whom I can not because their names, once familiar, have faded from my memory with time. First to come to my mind are my colleagues at the Agro-economic Research Centre, Gwalior - at one time led by Shri S M Roy and then by Shri H S Azariah. The closest to me — the ones who went into the field during the initial contacts with the Adivasis of Alirajpur were the young investigators K M Chaudhry and N Varshney. It is with Chaudhry that I first came to know the good people of Bamanta. And it was Chaudhry who introduced me to the generous Patel of Bamanta. In the later period when Chaudhry was no longer with me, Gulab Singh Patel became my closest ally and friend. Chaudhry, the investigator and Gulab Singh, the Adivasi Patel of Bamanta, as well as other brethren of his, I remember with affection and regard.

Officials are much criticised in the tribal areas, but they are also the most sought after by the research teams and exploited, so I gather, under all pretexts by the clever large-city wallahs. Without their co-operation where would I have been, or for that matter, the other researchers that throng the tribal areas? I can name only a few but I got help from a large number. Shri K M Bhowraskar, Shri Moge, Shri Arzhere and Shri Bhonsle and last but not the least the VLW of Bamanta Shri Pagare — the plant-*badwa* (medicineman) of Bamanta come to my mind; grateful salutations to them.

Though I mention last of all my intellectual companions and mentors at the Delhi School of Economics, Department of

Sociology, my esteem for them is the highest and my debt to them the greatest. Professor M N Srinivas, my guide, teacher and senior colleague — the thesis is permeated with his thinking, as I have gathered it in the class rooms and corridors of the School. Andre Beteille who was my guide for sometime, was kind enough to go through the drafts of the thesis and helped me immensely with his candid comments. M S A Rao and A M Shah I remember not so much because they directly helped me but provided the stimulating environment which is essential to the growth of any mind. My best friends and closest intellectual allies have been my students, some of whom have now joined the ranks of the professional sociologists. I shared my concerns with them and remember them with affection and gratitude.

The publication of this work has been possible because of a grant of Rs. 3,000 from ICSSR. I must also acknowledge Principal N P Sen of the ASCI who encouraged me by agreeing to have it published by the College.

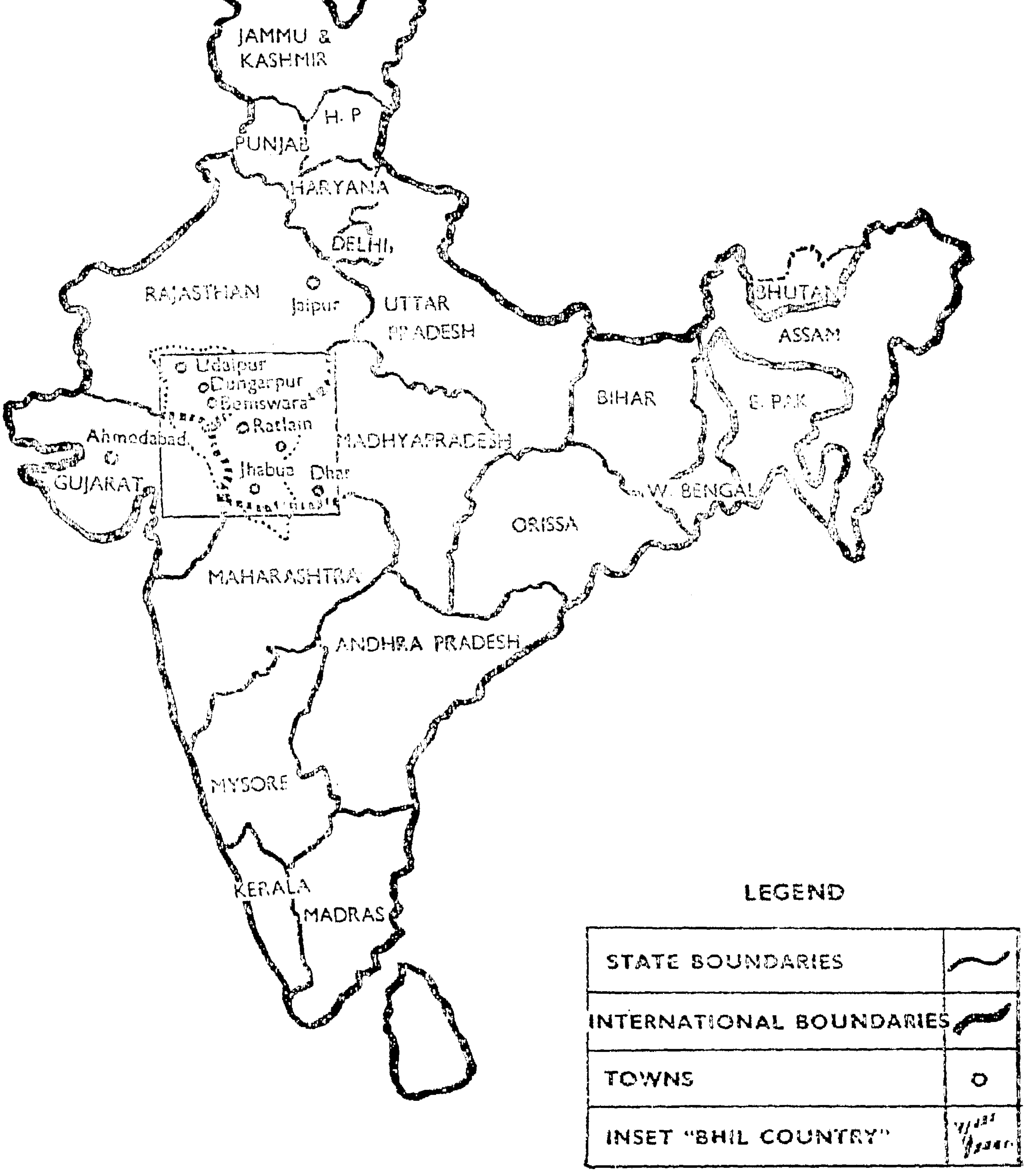
On some sacred occasions the Bhilalas prepare sacred drawings signifying various aspects of the supernatural. Usually one spot on the sacred drawing is filled with turmeric and safron spots. Each of these spots is for the forgotten ones. These are called *Bhul Chuk na Tika*. I end my acknowledgments with the same.

1 December 1972 G S AURORA

INDIA

WITH "BHIL COUNTRY"

MAP 1



CHAPTER I

Introduction

1. The problem

Alirajpur Tehsil is an administrative sub-division of Jhabua District of Madhya Pradesh. Jhabua District is one of a dozen or so districts of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra where the Bhils and allied tribes form a considerable proportion of the population. The Bhil region is, by and large, sub-mountain and was at one time famous for its thick forests. Even today the tribal villages in Banswara, Jhabua, Ratanmal and Dungarpur are located near reserved forests. The average rainfall in Alirajpur during the three years 1956–58 was 1034.9 m.m. In the year 1957, which was a drought year, it was 872.2 m.m.[1] Monsoons arrive in the region around the middle of June and last till the middle of August.

My area of intensive research was confined to the Tehsil of Alirajpur and within the Tehsil to the village of Bamanta and the town of Alirajpur.

Alirajpur town is the headquarters of the Alirajpur sub-division, Alirajpur Tehsil and Alirajpur National Extension Block. It is a town with a population of about 10,000 people. A majority of the people in the town are engaged in commerce or allied occupations. Besides the shopkeepers, itinerant traders, shop assistants, casual labourers, etc, there are also a large number of people engaged in tertiary industries such as tailoring, pottoring, sweet-meat making, tea-shop keeping and carpentering. There are two factories engaged in oil pressing, two engineering shops, a small diesel oil thermal electric generator (which has stopped functioning after I left the field); some skilled and semi-skilled workers are engaged in these industries. There are also a number of black-smiths, motor mechanics and drivers in the town.

A large number of people are engaged by government departments. Hindus are nearly three-fourths of the population of the town and the Muslims about one-fourth.

Bamanta is a tribal village. It is located about seven miles from Alirajpur town. A metalled road which links Alirajpur with a neighbouring town — Kukshi — passes at a distance of about a mile from the village. It is a small village of 295 souls (1961). There are 50 households in the village of which 47 are Bhilala and three Balai. There is a non-Adivasi school teacher resident in the village. In 1960–61, a viilage level worker (lady) and a mid-wife were staying in the village; but their posts were abolished later on.

Bamanta serves me as a case study illustrating the local level of community. My basic aim in the work is not to do a village study *per se* but to use it to illustrate the areas of autonomy and dependence of the rural community *vis-a-vis* the wider regional level community. I have often taken bits of details from the ethnographic material from my study of the town of Alirajpur and juxtaposed it against that of the village in order to highlight a point of contrast or similarity implying either continuity or discontinuity between the rural and urban cultures.

II

I view the social system of Alirajpur as a composite of two major sub-systems, namely, the rural system and the urban system. Radcliffe-Brown defines a system as a "set of actions and interrelations amongst persons". These (actions, interrelations) are interconnected by a certain core of institutions "in such a way that we can give a general analytical description of them as constituting a system."[2] All those actions and interrelations, which are centred around life in villages, constitute the rural system. For our purposes the village may be defined as that kind of a community in which the dominant modes of production are agriculture and allied occupations. Similarly, the urban system may be thought of as a complex of all those actions and interrelations which are centred in towns and commercial villages.

Towns and commercial villages are those communities where the dominant occupations are commercial, industrial or administrative. The urban society in Alirajpur is, on the whole, based on a cultural model similar to the one that is found in the small towns of North India. Since there are very few studies of small towns,[3] I can only give my personal impressions about these towns. The central features of these towns are the following: Firstly, they have a commercial economy, based on trade in agricultural produce of the region and distribution of consumers goods produced in larger industrial centres. Thus, in most of these towns (*Kasbah*) there are wholesale grain merchants and traders in other commodities, such as textiles, groceries, hardware, etc. Secondly, the money lending to the peasantry plays an important part in the economy of these towns. Thirdly, there is usually a small servicing sector—composed of occupations, such as tailors, pottors, shoemakers—which serves both the town people as well as the peasantry in the neighbouring villages. Fourthly, the families and individuals engaged in commercial, servicing and craft occupations belong to various caste and religious communities. Most of the members of these castes are usually related to each other affinally or agnatically and thus form close-knit kin-based communities. Often these communities have their associations that help members in various ways, e. g., by providing utensils and tents, and hostel accommodation needed during the marriage and funerary feasts; by giving monetary aid to the poor and the aged in the community; and by providing a platform to the caste members for voicing various demands. Often the leaders of the associations act as the representatives of the community in inter-caste or secular activities. Hindu castes of these towns, on the whole, tend to be vegetarian and Sanskritic in their commensal and ritual behaviour.

Alirajpur, though similar to the towns in the plains, differs from them in a number of ways. Wholesale trade in grains in Alirajpur plays only a minor part. There is a thriving retail trade in many commodities but the bulk of the retail trade takes place on the day of the weekly market when Adivasis from the surrounding country come to the town in large numbers. Money

lending is also more widespread in Alirajpur than in the Kasbahs. Even the artisans engage in money lending as a "side line". Servicing and craft occupations are far more important in Alirajpur. A very large proportion of the skilled workers of the region are concentrated here. The trader, the artisan, the *Halwai* (sweet-meat maker), the tailor, all cater to the needs of the Adivasi customers. It is interesting to note that the Adivasi villages do not have many craftsmen, servicemen and traders located in the villages.

III

In section two of this work I have given a detailed description and analysis of the rural sub-system. At this stage I would like to point out only those salient features of the "rural system" which distinguish it from the rural systems of the plains of Northern India. The Adivasi villages are dispersed as opposed to the nucleated villages of the plains. Hamlet is an important recognisable ecological unit of the residential pattern of the village society. People living within a hamlet usually belong to allied households in terms of kinship, that is, agnatic and affinal relations, and economic interdependence. Thus, the hamlet level of community feeling is the strongest. Kinship and economic ties are not only cohesive but also divisive forces. This is often lost sight of by the observers. While describing the rural system at its various levels I have given data which illustrate both cohesion and division within it.

Since each hamlet is usually associated with a specific local lineage (minimal lineage) [4] of a clan, conflict within a hamlet is basically seen as conflict between domestic units within the local lineage. This conflict is seldom allowed to appear in too glaring a fashion. One of the mechanisms whereby conflict within the local lineage is sought to be kept at its minimum is by a policy of granting freedom to each married couple to separate soon after their marriage. This means that genuine tensions between potential domestic units (nuclear families within a joint family) usually do not accumulate for too long prior to bifurcation. This practice stands in sharp contrast to the joint families of the farming

castes of the plains.[5] Among them division is a painful, long-drawn process; so that when the break does arrive, it brings forth deeper and emotionally far more tension between the segments of a lineage. The implication of smoother segmentation among the tribals is that the minimal lineages consisting of families tracing their origin from known agnates and living within a village, display greater cohesion and lesser factionalism, as compared to the kinship units of the same level in the village of the plains. Although internal tensions within a local lineage may be less, tensions between the minimal lineages living in different hamlets may be great. These tensions are rarely expressed as group clashes. The expression of hostility is usually in individual violence or organised night robberies.

When people belonging to different clans live together within a hamlet they are more often affinally allied to each other and therefore treat each other as if they were of the same "family" (*Bhai-Bete*). Hamlet is the effective unit of exogamy besides the clan. Quite often two local lineages of the same clan may be resident in different hamlets of the same village. Sometimes families of different *Jatis* (tribes) may also live in the same hamlet. But this is not so common, except in the case of Balais. Balais as the servants of the farming communities do occasionally live in the same hamlet as their masters. Bhils and Bhilalas have, usually, separate hamlets of their own. Beside the hamlet, village is another level of the primary community. The boundaries of the village are officially defined by the revenue administration. But the social boundaries of the village are strengthened by religious institutions, such as worship of village deities, and networks of neighbourhood, friendship and kinship ties across hamlets.

Though village is a unit of social cohesion it is not as clearly a unit of social conflict. In this respect it contrasts with the villages in the plains. Clashes between villages *qua* villages are not known. The alignments rather follow the kinship networks. It is only at the hamlet level that neighbourhood and kinship links make hamlets into effective political units of the greatest importance. The importance of the village has, however,

increased as the villages have developed more ramified relations with the administrative and political institutions at the higher levels. We can thus see that the articulation of the political-social unity of the tribals rests on the hamlet as the basic unit. At the same time the administration tends to treat the village as the basic unit of rural life. In 1962, there was a major clash in Gahwan village between the tribals and the police as a result of which the whole of the village was placed under rigorous police surveillance. Later enquiries by our investigator, Shri Varshny, revealed that the whole of the village was not involved in the incidents, but only the lineally aligned Bhils of two hamlets.

Kinship networks may be traced from any given village to villages within approximately fifteen miles radius. These networks can be either affinal or agnatic. Once an individual or a primary family breaks away from a local lineage to settle in another village, contacts with them are sought to be revived every now and then, when search for a bride, grass, Mahuwa *(bassia latifolia)* flowers or wood takes a tribal to the village where his *Bhai - Bete* or *Baba - Kakas* (Brothers, sons or uncles) have gone and settled. The final death ceremony (*Ujban*) takes place only once in two decades or so. It is at this ceremony that the clansmen gather to "release" the souls of their dead form their ties to the material world, so that they may be reborn again. The relations with the affines are, on the whole, far more intense and full of co-operation as well as conflict. The conflict is on account of disputes over the payments of "bride money" or abduction of women. Customarily the disputes of this nature involve not only the families of orientation of the disputants but the whole of the minimal lineages as well as the lineages aligned to them with ties of neighbourhood, and marriage. However the brunt of the conflict is borne by the local lineages alone.

IV

The following communities of Alirajpur Tehsil are officially defined as Schedule Tribes: Bhils, Bhilalas, Mankaurs and Patelias. Besides these tribes, the Chamars and Balais in Alirajpur as well as other parts of the Bhil area, are culturally, a part

and parcel of the tribal system, but they are officially defind as scheduled castes. I have often used the term Hindu *jati* in juxtaposition to tribal *jati*. This does not mean that the tribals are not Hindus. The term is used to highlight the contrast between the levels of Sanskritisation of the tribals and non-tribal caste—Hindu *jatis*. The terms tribal and Adivasi are used interchangeably, though Adivasi is a more specific term used by the people to differentiate certain communities from others. To start with I use the term tribal for the officially defined category of Bhil and allied communities. The tribal communities are viewed as *jatis* by the local people. But the term *jati* has to be distingushed from the sociological term "caste". *jati* is used in the sense of a recognisable social division; whereas the term caste connotes an endogamous community within a society composed of interdependent communities arranged in a hierarchy.[6]

Andre Beteille (1964: 130-34) has given us an illuminating explanation of the relation between the terms caste and *jati* which helps us to clarify the terminological confusion arising from the use of the word *jati* and the technical sociological meaning of the word "caste". Beteille explains that various meanings of such concepts as *jati* and *varna* can be seen to have a common thread running through them. This thread is the idea of a hierarchy of segments at various levels. Mutual relations between these levels are guided by the principles of fusion and division. The lower level segments fusing when the action shifts to segments at higher levels and dividing into competing groups when conflict at the higher levels recedes into the background.[7] The problem we are dealing with is a little more complex than the one raised by Beteille. we have to show not only the relation between caste and *jati* but also between *jati* and tribe. In the traditional culture idiom, the term *jati* has been used to refer to all units of indentification, almost in the same way as the word class has been used in English. The interesting feature of the modern usage of the term is that the emergent interest groups—economic, political, professional—are not called *jatis* but as *Sansthain*. In Alirajpur, the tribal communities are referred to as *jatis* by tribals as well as non-tribals. At the same time the tribals use

the term to refer to the exogamous clans within the same tribal community as well. It is possible for the participants in the caste system to define every level of segmentation as *jati* since within a particular context they are clear about the relevant unit of segmentation. Thus, segmentation in the local context is between minimal lineages. In slightly winder contexts the lineage level is ignored and that of the endogamous units emphasised.

V

If we apply Bailey's concept of the tribe-caste continuum to our area[8] then we have to place the rural society of Alirajpur somewhere in the middle of the continuum. The rural-tribal society displays many of the characteristics that one normally associates with the caste society; for example, the arrangement of tribal communities into a ritually ranked hierarchy; the evaluation of the purity-impurity of the castes on the same basis as one finds in the "Hindu" society; a primitive specialisation of some functions—for example the kotwals or Balais act as drummers in Bhil and Bhilala marriages, deaths and village's religious propitiations; the expression of rituo-social distance in commensal behaviour, etc.

When we shift our attention from the local rural community to the somewhat wider rural-urban community we discern the caste element at that level as well. Many of the needs of the tribal people, such as clay pots, bullock-cart wheels and iron implements are met by castes specialised in these crafts. At the same time the specialisation by the ethnic communities within the rural set-up is not sufficiently advanced for us to define these ethnic communities as specilist castes with their own traditional occupations. The tribal farmers are, for example, their own carpenters,masons, drawers of water, makers of baskets and ropes. A few of the tribal families have taken to blacksmithy as an additional source of income, without in anyway affecting their ritual or social status as tribal farmers. Wearing loin (*Kosti*) and shoe making and hide tanning are considered ritually impure vocations and relegated to ritually lower tribal *jatis*—Balais and Chamars. But only in a few cases is the structure

of inter-community economic relations similar to the typical Jajmani kind. For example, a few of the tribals have yearly contracts with potter families who receive fixed payments in kind—foodgrains in lieu of all the pots needed by the tribal famliy throughout the year. In isolated cases a similar arrangement may also be made between tribal farmer and a chamar.

Wherever a rich Bhilala farmer has a Bhil or a Balai servant (Pavar) to work on his fields, he too receives his payment, after each harvest, in grains. The payment ranges between 40 to 60 *Choki* (approximately 150 to 220 kilograms) for a full time servant who does not eat with their masters. Sometimes the servants may be employed for shorter periods, in which case the payment is from one and a half seer (kilograms) to two seers (kilograms) per day. No *Jajmani* type of relation exists between the tribal farmer and the carpenters and iron-smiths.

Occasionally, the tribals also have semi-traditional relations with their traders, *Vanyas* and Bohras in local dialect. The Vanya gets practically all the farmer's surplus in lieu of debts, while the farmer is seldom refused monetary aid by the Vanya, when it is urgently needed. The transactions are, however always converted into monetary deals. In this type of relation the mutual rights and duties and the interests charged are not strictly defined. The freedom of action of the parties is also much greater than that found in the *Jajmani* system. On the whole it is "contract" and "bargain" which guide the relations between the mass of the tribals and the townsmen. From the above discussion a few points emerge. Since the society at the village level lacks specialisation the caste system is only marginally present at that level. Of the basic characteristics of the caste system—endogamy—specialisation of economic roles, specialisation of ritual roles, and hierarchies of status honour based on differential distribution of economic, ritual and political power—only the last characteristic is present in an attenuated form. But when one shifts one's attention to the wider regional social system certain specialisation of functions, following the caste lines, does seem to appear. Again, although caste system as a system of functio-

nally interdependent endogamous communities is relatively less important in the rural society, caste as an idiom of culture is very much a part of the consciousness of the tribals.

2. History of The Project and Development of Basic Concepts

VI

I started this project in the traditional style of a socio-economic village survey, in which form in fact, it remained until 1963, when I wrote a monograph *Bamanta, Socio-economic Monograph of a Tribal Village.* The Agro-economic Research Centre, for whom I wrote the monograph, conducted schemes of "continuous village surveys". It was believed that if one were to make intensive economic and social surveys of selected villages in each region one would be able to get a picture of the rural economy of that region. The assumption is that the selected villages would be more or less representative for the villages in the region. One survey would be followed by surveys every five years and one would thus be able to have bench marks for social change in rural India. Since the tribal population forms nearly 25 per cent of the total population of Madhya Pradesh, the Agro-Economic Research Centre for Madhya Pradesh decided to study a number of villages in the Bhil region. The authorities in the Centre thought that a sociologist would be the most qualified to study the tribal villages, which led to my involvement in the study of the villages in the Bhil area. In the beginning the project was more ambitious than it came to be in the end. We had decided to select four villages with the idea of throwing some light on the following variables: a) nature of community, that is, the residential pattern of the community; for the study of this variable, at least one of the villages had to be "nucleated type" and one the "dispersed type". b) Receptivity to developmental efforts; for testing this variable, one of the villages had to be "progressive" and the other "traditional". Despite these elaborate precautions to have a fool proof design we were ultimately left with the study of only two villages. One of these – Bamanta – was found to be relatively "receptive", and the other – Gahwan – was not so co-operative to the development agents. Gahwan had also

one of the highest number of known murders in the Tehsil and many of its residents were involved in criminal cases.

Before the villages were selected and the investigators posted I was permitted to make a general exploratory tour of the Bhil region. This proved to be extremely helpful in getting a synoptic idea of the cultural variations within the Bhil region. For many reasons which are irrelevant to our discussion, only one of the villages, Bamanta, could be surveyed under my exclusive guidance. Shri K. M. Chaudhry, then junior research investigator, in the Agro-Economic Research Centre, was selected to stay in the village for almost one full year and act as the "eyes and ears" of the research officer. Chaudhry was supplied with detailed structured schedules to collect statistical data. He was also asked to fill in a daily diary of "comings and goings" in the village and other events. During almost every season I myself visited Bamanta, to train the investigator, check his work, and to make my own observations. In 1963, I wrote out the first draft of the village study which was mimeographed and issued for private circulation.

VII

As I was writing the report of the village, a number of questions and problems cropped up. The first question was: Can the Bhils and Bhilalas be treated as tribes? They did not seem to have the corporate social organisation one associates with the tribal groups. Nor did they seem to have the sense of closed moral communities. Each of the communities seemed to vary in different parts of the region. Even their economy was somewhat like the economy of the North Indian peasants; they did not practice shifting cultivation nor did they depend substantially on hunting or gathering pursuits. They wore clothes, though less than the peasants of other North Indian regions; but their items of clothing could be shown to be the same as found among North Indian peasantry. The most important fact which made me doubt their definition as tribes was that they classified each other as higher or lower *Jatis* on the principle of pollution and purity, based on their eating habits. However, the town

people, through whom I was entering the social space of the Adivasis, did not doubt the fact that they were a different cultural species from themselves and peasants from other parts of the country. The Bhilade (a derogatory form of address for the Bhilalas) wore loin cloth (*Kosti*); lived in jungles (which meant in houses isolated from each other); spoke an "un-cultured" language; were mostly uneducated; lacked any knowledge of Hindu gods and goddesses; always carried weapons, such as bows and arrows and large sickles; murdered each other at the slightest provocation, and above all, like the lowest castes, practiced "bride wealth" and *Devar-Batta*, that is, married their brother's widows. My own observations suggested: whether the Adivasis are considered tribals or not, they were certainly culturally and socially different from the ordinary rural Hindu castes.

VIII

The second question which confronted me was: Can one consider the tribal's economy as subsistance economy, based on self-sufficiency? While analysing the economic aspect of the tribal life I was faced with a fact that appeared paradoxical at that time. According to one set of information the tribal economy appeared to be accentuated towards greater self-sufficiency of the family. The tribals tended to produce most of the essential things they needed. Accent for self-sufficiency was apparent from the fact they were their own barbers, masons, carpenters, brick and tile backers and priests. They also produced on each farm as many varieties of crops as they thought they would need for their consumption so that one often found a single farmer producing very large number of legumes and cereals. At the same time when the value of all the consumption items was broken down into self-produced and purchased categories it was found that the value of the purchased commodities was 23.4 per cent of the total consumed. How was one to explain this figure and yet hold ones view of the relatively high self-sufficiency of the farmer? The answer was found in a number of related facts that were to be taken into account while considering the self-sufficiency or otherwise of the tribal econom.y Firstly,

the "value" of the commodities was calculated in terms of the market price. Usually what the tribals consumed for sustenance came from their own farms but commodities that were of secondary importance, such as jewellery and clothes came from the market. The relative market value of the consumer goods was very much higher than that of the food items necessary for the bodily upkeep of the tribals. Secondly, during the scarcity season the tribals were forced to come to the market and purchase even food items. Thirdly, the credit and banking system very effectively took care of all the surplus product of the tribal farm, so that during scarcity he was forced to come to the *Vanya* for further loans for consumption needs and seeds. Lastly, the tribal villages had rarely any shops so that they had to go to the nearest commercial centre to do all their purchases. The absence of the commercial element at the village level impelled the Adivasi to come into direct touch with the commercial elements in the town of Alirajpur and the commercial villages. We had therefore a situation in which the tribals tried to avoid purchases of various items from the town, and spend as little money as possible; and yet, because of the reason noted above found themselves squarely tied to the economic system of the commercial castes.

IX

The third question raised was not a new one; it had been posed by the sociologists and social anthropologists interested in the processes of diffusion of culture traits from high-culture areas to the tribal areas. The question is: To what extent are the tribals a part of the broader Hindu culture ? Here again, the answers could not be simple because in the process of their penetration the Hindu, or rather, exogenous traits got thoroughly transformed. An attempt to answer this question led me to a consideration of the possible channels whereby new traits were being brought into the tribal culture. Social-anthropological literature dealing with the process of culture change in India is rich with discussions and analyses of the processes of diffusion of culture traits from "high culture" centres to little communities. The work of Srinivas is well known.[9] His observations and inten-

sive study of the Coorgs very vividly presents the existence of culture traits of Sanskritic origin at local (i.e. Okka, joint family) level, in one form or the other. He anticipated Marriott's development of the concept of parochialisation by describing the process of the transformation of Sanskritic traits as they get assimilated in the socio-cultural system at the local levels. Later on Marriott further developed and highlighted this process. His concept of universalisation, that is inclusion of local traits into the mainstream of the universal, Sanskritic traditions, also enriched our understanding of the problem.[10] Singer's[11] study of the religious traditions of Madras City too is another significant contribution in our understanding of the relation between the high culture and the local culture.

Srinivas had assumed in his Coorg study that the Brahmins were the main agents or models for Sanskritisation at the local levels. Hewever, his latter work, *Social Change in Modern India*[12] took note of the criticism of many scholars who pointed out that any of the higher castes could act as models of social change in a region. Thus, Rajputs acted as the models of change among the lower farming *Jatis* in Rajasthan, U. P., and Madhya Pradesh. Our study supports Srinivas's contention by pointing out some of the social processes whereby culture traits of the higher urban-based castes radiate among the tribals. Our study not only points out the specific model leaders among the caste Hindus of Alirajpur, but also points out their deep link with the urban culture and social system. Our study advances the idea that special institutions link the rural and the urban cultures and act as the channels of communication for diffusion of culture traits. Of these institutions we have mentioned the Rajput Jagirdar, Bhilala Patels and *Vanya* money lenders. Besides these agents of culture change among the tribals, there are also the government servants, such as school teachers, village level workers, village record-keepers (Patwaris) and host of other government employees. Their roles do not only radiate Sanskritic values but also westernisation.

X

The next question that suggested itself was: What is the

relation between the politics of the Adivasi *qua* Adivasi and the politics of the central authority *vis-a-vis* the Adivasi? The political aspect of the rural system can be better understood if we look at it from a "historical" point of view. Tangible historical records giving information on the ancient tribal political system are not available, but one can make a few plausible conjectures on the basis of some of the persisting simpler institutions of their society, which are effective even today at local levels. With their help the Adivasi, even today, is able to maintain his autonomy. The traditional tribal system functioned through two types of institutions. Firstly, there were the clan and local lineage *Mukhis* which belonged to special families. The office of *Mukhi* was inherited by the eldest son. The *Mukhi* was often assisted by a clan council of elders, who represented different minimal lineages living in the same village. The most important among the members of the council were the clan *pujaras* (priests). The main function of the *Mukhi* today is to call clan meetings, on such occasions as the propitiation ceremonies (Ujban) for the dead. The *Mukhi* was not only the leader of his own clan or lineage, but also of the lineages living in the same hamlet as its junior allies and affinal relatives. The second institution was the system of the Council of elders (Panchayats). The *panchayats* were not a highly structured institution. The composition of a *panchayat* varied according to the nature of work and its social context. When there was a dispute or violation of the tribal norms within a hamlet, the *panchayat* consisted of the elders from within the hamlet. When the dispute was between members of two different hamlets the membership of the council consisted of not only the elders of the two hamlets but also the village leaders, such as the clan *Mukhi* of the dominant clan. In case of conflicts between members of the different tribes, mediators from non-tribal castes were also included in the *panchayat*. The mediator (*Bhanjgadeo*) was an important institution to solve disputes relating of adbuction or elopement.

According to the Gazetteer of the Alirajpur State (1908), Alirajpur kingdom was established around 1437 A.D.[13] but probably the penetration of the Rajput influence in a more direct

manner did not happen until around the end of the eighteenth century when the Ali dynasty moved its headquarters from the fort at Ali to the present site, by the side of the Sukhar river.

Rajput penetration seems to have happened gradually by an extension of relations of mutuality between the tribal leaders and the better organised Rajputs. By recognising their allies among the tribals as the leaders (Patels) of their respective communities, and by acting as mediators in the internal disputes between various tribal segments, the Rajputs acquired a functional role in the political life of the tribals. Over a period of time they established many Jagirdars from among the Bhilalas. With Bhilalas they also maintained informal kind of kinship relations, by taking their additional "wives" from among the leading Bhilala families. In this way the political systems of the tribal society had developed a complex of leadership institutions such as Patels, Bara Gao'n Patel, Kotwal (village guards) and Jagirdars (landed estate holders). By the end of the eighteenth century these institutions had become a part and parcel of the traditional tribal system. The Patels had replaced the *Mukhis* as the major leader ship institutian at the village level; and the bigger Patels (Bara Gao'n Patels), the Jagirdars, and other non-Adivasi persons of repute had become important mediating and enforcement authorities at the winder regional levels.

A limited amount of bureaucratisation of the administration had come by the end of the eighteenth century. The State was divided into districts (parganahs) and in each parganah an administrator (kamasdar) was appointed. He was assisted by a number of lesser officials such as patwaris (village record keepers). The general administrative and revenue collecting machinery was headed by the Chief Minister (Diwan). With the penetration of the British influence a further elaboration of the administrative machinery took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Besides the general administration wing the administrative machinery consisted of special departments such as forests, excise, public works, police and health. Each of these departments was headed by an expert officer. At the local level the patwaris, the

head constables, the forest guards developed close relalions with the tribal leaders and were often asked to intercede in their mutual conflicts at *Bhajgadeos* (Mediators). Thus, even these new institutions of authority, though relatively more impersonal than the Patels and Jagirdars, functioned in collaboration with them and were often included within the tribal system of politics. Despite these elaborate channels of authority between the tribal and the central Rajput administration the tribals were able to maintain a high degree of political autonomy at the local level. This was possible for them mainly due to the fact that the tribals tended to solve most of their disputes through their own traditional panchayats (councils); and many of the local level "outside" leaders were informally incorporated in this system.

By over-emphasising the functional inter-linkage between the political personnel at the central levels and the tribal system at the local level I have probably created the wrong impression of a lack of tension between the tribal and the non-tribal elements in the regional society. Until independence the Adivasis were a badly exploited section. They had to work on government works such as roads, buildings and bridges, but they were not paid. *Vanyas* called their clients to serve them during marriages and feasts for which they got food or an occasional present. When a *vanya's* cow go dry and does not yield milk it was sent off to one of the creditors (*Asamis*) to be fed until it calved and began lactating again. The government servants got all their grains and liquor from the tribals without making substantial payments for what they got. Besides the land revenue the tribals had to pay excise dues per plough. Since excise collection was given out on contract, the contractor was able to illegally extort money from the tribals. Only in one respect were the tribals somewhat better off than they were after independence. Justice in those days was much cheaper, since few people were dragged to the courts. It was easy enough to approach the Raja personally and many tribals took advantage of this to get their grievances redressed without resort to the courts.

After independence the Adivasi was given certain

special political rights. The Constitution gave him the right to elect his own Adivasi representatives to political institutions at various levels. The Block Development and Panchayati raj movement sought to include him in the political and economic life of the country and the region as an equal. The effect of all these developments has been an increase in the political and social consciousness of the tribal. An interesting aspect of the increased opportunities of mobility in the region has been the articulation of caste and tribal consciousness for political and economic ends. By and large, traditional institutions and loyalties have remained of consequence for mobilising political support but other non-traditional loyalties too have been built up, through sincere social and political work among the tribals. Patels, *Mukhis* and Jagirdars do influence the tribal voters decisively in most cases; but in a few cases Adivasis are known to have voted against their wishes also.

We can discern from the brief presentation of the political aspect a close inter-twining of the tribal political system and the system of authority as it emerged as a consequence of the extension of the political frontier. It is interesting to note that as the broader political system envelops the tribal system the tribal system does not disappear but continues to play an important part at the local level and even incorporates the agents of the wider political system within its own ambit. For example, the Rajput Jagirdars and revenue collectors (patwaris) are often prevailed upon to become *Bhanjgadeo* (mediators) and the Patel has been totally incorporated not only in the village leadership but has also been given specific ritual part to play in Bhilala marriages and village ceremonies.

A consideration of the questions raised above led me to some tentative answers. They were:

(a) The economy of the Adivasis was in transition from a subsistance to a market-oriented economy. It was not developing towards the model of inter-caste village economy but was rather in the process of integration into the wider commercial economy of the region.

(b) Culturally, the Adivasis internalised the traits of the town-based castes but in such a manner that the total configuration of their culture remained distinct from the culture of the caste Hindus.

(c) Although the Adivasis maintained a certain identity of their ancient tribal system, they also internalised the functions of the centralised political system of the Rajputs. In this process many of the non-tribal institutions became broker institutions [14] between the tribal and the non-tribal.

To arrive at such conclusions was to admit that tribal villages could not be fully understood without placing them in the context of the urban-located society and culture.

XI

Once I had decided to treat the problem of understanding the tribal village from the perspective of its (the village's) relation with the urban society, my strategy of research had to be altered from the exclusive study of a village to a study of an urban centre within whose "field" the village was located. The next stage of this plan was to make a close scrutiny of the areas in which and the processes by which the rural and the urban systems dove-tailed into each other. In the spring of 1965, I was given about two months study leave which when combined with the summer vacation allowed me nearly four months in the field. I stayed, during this period, in Alirajpur town and also visited villages neighbouring it to get data on rural-urban relations. I visited Alirajpur again in 1966 summer and followed it up by more visits in December 1966 and February 1967. The last two visits were in connection with a study of the 1967 General Elections in Alirajpur as a part of the general plan of studies on the general election organised by the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi.

In the new phase of my work in Alirajpur I was encountering somewhat different kinds of theoretical problems. The most elementary and the most troublesome of these was a matter

of simple definition of the terms—rural and urban systems. When a *vanya* went and established a temporary shop in a village in the interior, was he acting in the system of urban relations or rural relations? When a village headman (Patel) helped the *patwari* (land record keeper) to collect revenue from the Adivasi peasants, was he acting within a system of rural relations or urban relations? If one were to define rural and urban in terms purely of their special locus then one was unjust to their content.

The second problem arose from the paradox of contradictory orientations in changing contexts. In the context of the village life the tribal seemed oriented towards: (a) maximum self-sufficiency of the family (b) an ethnocentric emphasis on the specific features of the "tribal culture"; and (c) a not very consistent use of the caste idiom. At the same time whenever the Adivasi tended to act in wider contexts than the village society his actions implied his dependence on the market economy; for example, when he went to the town the special clothes that he wore came from the bazar. He wore shoes, wrapped a sheet round his waist and carried a bit of money in his pocket. If he had no money he took a bag full of grains to be sold for ready cash. We can also consider marriage as another occasion at which the Adivasi acted in a wider context than his village society. Again we found that the Adivasi acquired a great deal of money to conduct various activities and rituals associated with the marriages. Take, for example, the expenditure incurred on the *Bhangi* (scavanger) bands, silver jewellery, clothes, saltish titbits, jaggery, spices and finally hard cash. The relation of context with a specific orientation was obvious also from the fact that in these wider contexts the Adivasi tended to come closer to the cultural model of the caste Hindus. This was apparent from his dress when in town. The awareness of the close connection of the behaviour with the context led me to the important concept of the community levels.

XII

The concept of community levels was first suggested by Betty Starr.[15] She was stimulated to suggest this idea through an

application of the concept of folk-urban continuum[16] to modern Western society. In her study ofa community in Mexico, she found that levels of community relationsformahierarchical seriesin which the lower level communities were integrated into the higher level ones. Marriott commenting on the applicability of thisconcept tohis field material says: "But the concept of levels of communal relations contrasts with much that is most characteristic of Kishangarhi. A series of enclosing, nucleated greater communities is not evident; instead social relations of each different kind spread out in widely different patterns". My feeling about the "difficulty" encountered by Marriott is that, he has not seriously tried to apply the concept of community levels, because he was not sufficiently interested in that model. No one using this model for describing the structure of social relations would claim that neat maps could be prepared with concordant spread of different types of ties in specially defined areas. What we have, in fact, is a certain limited concordance of some types of relationships leading to a certain sense of belongingness among the people. And indeed in his and Cohen's later work this idea has appeared in a sophisticated form.[17]

In my own interpretation of the concept of community levels I have been deeply influenced by Steward's idea, namely, levels of socio-cultural integration.[18] Steward suggested that one could view the culture of a wider total society in terms of its various levels. At the lowest levels various communities could continue to live a "culture" based upon their own level of technology and the specific natural conditions. But at the same time they could develop their own form of participation in the institutions which included them in the wider society. In this way Steward could explain the coexistence of various interdependent cultures at various stages of evolution. The idea of "integration" could, however, be used not only to describe relations between socio-culturally distinct communities in larger plural societies but also socio-spacial levels of community existence in all societies. One could, for instance, say that the intimate primary groups in a neighbourhood (village, hamlet, lane, ward, etc,) developed a sense of community based on a certain

combination of features of similarity and complimentarity (i. e. definitive elements). The definitive elements in any situation may be kinship, caste, religion, occupation, patron-client relations, ideological affinities, similarities of culture and life situations, market relations and neighbourhood ties. It may be found as universally true that kinship and neighbourhood ties play a more dominant role in the primary level of community relations, whereas market relations and ideological identities play a more dominant part in secondary forms of community.

If one views the rural system of Alirajpur apart from the urban, one can empirically analyse it as forming various levels of community—primary, quasi primary and the secondary levels of community. The first ecological unit defining the most intense level of primary community among the Adivasis is the hamlet (*Phalya*). Usually, the families resident within a hamlet are related to each other by agnatic and affinal ties. The families help each other in many ways, such as exchange of labour (*Parji*) during harvest. They regularly visit each other for gossip, mutual advice and consultations. They also help each other materially as well as morally. In case of robberies, police cases, and quarrels with members of other hamlets they stand together with their neighbours. Besides the hamlet, the village is another level of the primary community. The boundaries of the village are officially defined, but the social boundaries of the village are strengthened by religious institutions, such as worship of village deities, and networks of neighbourhood, friendship and kinship ties. The cohesion of the village as a primary community is, somewhat less dense, in terms of frequency of social relations, than of the hamlet.

Each tribe is divided into a number of exogamous clans. Often a whole village or a number of hamlets of a village are dominated by a single clan of a tribal community. Bhaidyas of the Bhilala tribe are found in a number of villages in Alirajpur tehsil, such as Morasa, Kudla, Kanpur, Band, Kharkhadi, Borjhad, and Ambua (see Map 5). Bhaidyas of these villages often meet each other at the time of death or marriage in their families. Besides these villages, Bhaidyas are also to be found in

Dhar district and western Nimar district. Bhaidyas of these rather far off places meet each other only once in a while. The neighbouring lineages of the clans may therefore be thought of as constituting a quasi primary community.

In a subsequent chapter, I have described the kind of links which unite the affines to each other. If we draw a line connecting the three commercial centres of Alirajpur, Nanpur and Khatali (see Map 5) then the area covered by the triangle will contain nearly 63 per cent of the affine families of the Bamanta's householders, their sons, daughters and sisters. Only two of the marriages had taken place with the men of Dhar district. Rest of the marriages were within the Tehsil. There is much more coming and going between the affinally related families than between the dispersed segments of the clan. The affinal networks therefore lead to a much closer sense of community between neighbouring villages. We may call the tribal level as the secondary level of community. The tribe is united by a more general sense of belonging born of the fact that it is an endogamous community. There are no persons in the Tehsil who could be considered to symbolise the political unity of any tribe. The Member of the Legislative Assembly chosen from Alirajpur is a widely respected person in the Tehsil. His appeal, however, is not confined to the Bhilalas, the tribe to which he belongs.

The feeling of community is further strengthened by commonly shared life within political and administrative units. Loyalty to the Raja of Alirajpur is a very potent symbol of identity with the area known as Alirajpur. In many of the Bhilala Patel houses I have noticed photographs of the late ruler, Partab Singh. To some extent even the impersonal links ,with the administrative machinery encourage a vague sense of belonging to an area. The political networks of *panchayats* and *Nayai panchayats* (village and tehsil level councils and judicial councils) as also the elaborate machinery of the Block Development authorities certainly help to strengthen the Tehsil as one level of community of which the tribals are aware. The election cam-

paigns have probably done a great deal to enhance this sense of community and brought forward, in a more concrete manner, the link between the tribal voters and the administration. It must be kept in mind that the community levels are not clearly bounded. Before 1880 the administrative divisions at the sub-princedom levels were not clearly demarcated. But after that date there was a relatively clearer demarcation of administrative units. The community levels by their nature can not be coextensive with the administrative levels; though an inter-connection between the two cannot be ruled out. The consciousness of community is partly a function of political interaction as it certainly is a function of socio-cultural interaction.

XIII

In this work I do not wish to go into a detailed description and analysis of the urban levels of community. But it would be logical to make a brief mention of these levels in order to illustrate the concept in relation to the urban dimension of the regional social system. The traders and money-lenders of Alirajpur not only lend money and goods to the tribals but also to the traders of Nanpur, Khatali, Kathiwara, etc. (see Map 5). Bigger traders of Alirajpur are the natural leaders of the traders of these small trading centres. Very often the traders of Alirajpur send their relatives to the *Hats* in the interior, such as the one in Ajanda, Phul Mal and Chichli. Most of the wholesale agents are located in Alirajpur so that the retailers of the smaller centres have to keep in touch with Alirajpur. It is not uncommon for a trader in Alirajpur Tehsil to know not only a large number of people personally in his own "village" but also in Alirajpur. Municipal elections in Alirajpur evoke great interest among the traders of such places as Kathiwara. We may thus conclude that the commercial centres together form a kind of quasi-primary community for their residents.

The primary community for the people of a commercial centre is their "village" or town. The most intimate level in the community in Alirajpur town is the street or ward of the town. An old resident of the town is likely to know nearly all

the residents of the town, by sight, and by name, a great majority of the heads of families. People of many *jatis* and occupations live in the town. Quite often the independent nuclear families consist of descendants of the same agnates. It is possible to easily trace the relationship of the rest in the same caste to some affine of the original inhabitants of the caste. Most of the castes are organised into associations and caste panchayats are still quite powerful institutions. It is true that competition for clients often divides the traders and "bankers", and a feeling of resentment against the bigger traders is often expressed by the smaller traders; but, on the whole, the richer traders are respected, and most often tend to assume leadership of the social and political bodies of the communities.

Alirajpur, Dohad, Kukshi and Chota Udaipur have had relations with each other since ancient times. The traders of Chota Udaipur (Gujarat) and Alirajpur (Madhya Pradesh) often collaborate to smuggle goods across the State boundaries. One of the leading families of Alirajpur (*Rathod* caste) has established a factory in Jobat. Traders from Dohad often come to purchase mangoes during the season. *Mali* (vegetable sellers) of Kukshi come to Alirajpur with their loads of onions which they often exchange for *Charonji* (Buchanania latifolia) nuts sold by the Kathiwara Adivasi sellers. Besides the economic relations, *Vanyas, Rathods* (Teli-oil millers) and Brahmins try to find the marriage partners for their sons and daughters from these towns. The Rajput jagirdars and the princely family of Alirajpur have always been known to get their spouses from the neighbouring princely States of Gujarat.

It is interesting to note that spacial spread of the feeling of community is much greater for the urban people than it is for the rural people. The towns with whom the traders of Alirajpur maintain relations lie at vast distances from each other, and cut across many *Pradeshas* (States of the Union), whereas the spread of rural relationships is restricted mainly, within a Tehsil. The urban society is the focal point of economic and political power within the region. Through commercial networks

each centre draws agricultural resources from the tribal country, and supplies in turn, urban goods and money. Also, as the centre of political power, the urban system communicates power to the rural hinterland and thereby integrates it with the wider Indian society.

For certain limited purposes of analysis we can view the rural and urban societies separately but they are in fact linked to each other commercially and politically. Besides, we also observe a limited degree of cultural continuity between the two. The analysis of our data brings out the fact that each of the elements in the rural and the urban systems affects and is affected by some other elements, both in the rural and the urban systems. The two systems integrate, at the regional level of analysis, into a single rural-urban system.

XIV

The concept of community levels helped me to order my data and present a somewhat coherent synchronic picture. But it was also necessary to analyse the dynamics of social change. How was I to explain the changes taking place in the relationships between the rural and the urban sub-systems ? Again the work of Bailey[19] and Srinivas[20] suggested a possible model of change. I found that the history of Alirajpur could be summarised in three types of continuing processes—the extensions of economic, administrative and cultural frontiers[21]. The idea of frontier refers typically to the penetration of values and institutions from their areas of dominance to the areas that had previously been beyond their pale. Now, the idea of an advancing frontier implies that the people who are on the receiving side are somehow unable to resist the incursion of the exogenous traits. Their culture and society are thus placed in a position of inferiority. As "inferior" people their contribution to the culture of the outsiders is in terms of labour and, produce of their labour and lands in unprocessed forms. On the other hand, they receive from the outsiders products of skill and complex culture. On the whole, therefore, they are recipients of "culture" and donors of "labour."

One of the earliest known forces of change in this region was the political intrusion of the Rajput dynasty. There are also the remains of the thirteenth century Jain temples in this region; but the Jains left no apparent mark of their religion on the Adivasis. Rajput dynasties that came to the area around the fifteenth century, had brought the concept of centralised authority. It is interesting to reflect that authority pattern in the Rajput kinship organisation was itself based on the principles of centralisation and most of the tribes over whom they established their hegemony were non-centralised segmentary societies. The *Mukhis* of the localised clans seem to have been the only spokesmen of the clans and their affinal allies in their villages. The real power was vested with the *ad hoc* councils of the elders.

The Rajputs did not displace the earlier system entirely, but rather tried to incorporate it into their own system. Most of the local communities were organised into villages. Each village was placed under a Patel. Most often the Patel was recruited from among one of the important *Mukhi* families. This office was hereditary. In district Udaipur, Carstairs noted that each hamlet had its *Phalya Mukhi*.[22]

Besides the village Patels the Rajputs introduced additional foci which incidentally acted as foci for inter-tribal andinter-clan contact as well. Of these foci the weekly markets, administrative and judicial centres and the yearly *Dussehra* festival at Ali fort are worth mentioning.

The "commercial villages" which grew amidst the tribal villages could not have come about without the incorporation of the tribes into the wider political community. The political centralisation helped the growth of the money economy in two ways. Firstly, around the end of the nineteenth century the Adivasis were being increasingly forced to settle on land as sedentary peasants and stopped from engaging in shifting cultivation. The virgin lands were often allotted to non-Adivasis who grew on these plots cash crops, such as sesamum and chillies. Gradually, these commercial crops were taken on by the Adivasis also for cultivation. The second factor was charging of excise

dues from the Adivasis in cash. The collection of excise dues was given out in contract to one of the local traders.

Explanation of the expansion of the cultural frontier is more difficult since one has to assume a pre-contact culture about which there is very little remembered or known through documentary records in the tehsil nor is there a verbal tradition about them. However an attempt has been made to illustrate the processes of cultural diffusion from the "Hindu" to the "tribal" elements following the concepts of Sanskritisation[23] and "universalisation-parochialisation".[24]

Sanskritisation is based on a number of plausible assumptions. It assumes that there was a substantial difference in the culture of the original Indians prior to the domination of the Aryans. Again, these archaic cultures of the pre-Aryans have not disappeared entirely but continue to co-exist as lower folk-cultures. The culture of the Aryans, it is assumed, has continued to exist in a vast body of Sanskritic literature which was preserved by hereditary class of priests—Brahmins. Srinivas maintained that over a period of time, the Sanskritic literature was transformed by various accretions consisting primarily of interpretations, by Brahmin literati, of the ancient texts and incorporation of local religious systems, again, through their interpretation in terms of the major themes of the Sanskritic lore. In this way we have the development of regional and sub-regional categories of Sanskritic Hinduism.[25]

Sanskritisation explicitates the process of the percolation of high-culture traits to the low-culture areas, but it only implies the contrary tendency of the low-culture traits getting elevated to high-culture status through a process of incorporation. This contrary process was highlighted by Marriott in his concept, universalisation.[26]

Notes and References:

1. *Statistical Abstracts*, District Jhabua (Mimeo), 1960.

2. A. R. Radcliffe-Browns, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1952, p.6.

3. Cf. R.G. Fox, *From Zamindar to Ballot Box*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1969. This is one of the few studies of market towns in Northern India. Its description amply illustrates the points I make here about small towns.

4. Cf. E E. Evans-Pritchad, *The Nuer*, Oxford University Press, 1940. Evans-Pritchad defines a lineage as "a group of agnates, between whom kinship can be traced genealogically, and a clain is an exogamous system of lineages". A minimal lineage consists of such lineally related persons who are a local community and can trace their origin to a known agnate.

5. About the family system in a Malwa village Mathur writes: "Separation from parents is still considered to be improper, and a normal village man is expected to continue to live in his extended family, during the life time of his parents, at least of the father; sometimes in spite of strong pressure from his wife and other domestic quarrels and provocations." K. S. Mathur, *Caste and Ritual in a Malwa Village* Asia, Bombay, 1964, p 42.

6. Here I have followed Leach's lead. He writes: "Most conventional Indian ethnographies are written in a way which suggests that individual castes can usefully be considered in isolation. This is deceptive. In fact a caste can only be recognised in contrast to other castes with which its members are closely involved in a network of economic, political and ritual relationship." E. R. Leach, *Aspects of Caste*, Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology (2), Cambridge University Press, 1962.

7. A. Beteille, "A Note on the Referents of Caste", *European Journal of Sociology* Vol. V, pp. 130-34.

8. F. G. Bailey, *Tribe Caste and Nation*, Manchester University Press, 1960, p. 264. At one end of the continuum .. "is a society whose political system is entirely of the segmentary egalitarian type, and which contains no dependents whetsoever and at the other end of which is a society in which segmentary political relations exist only between a very small proportion of the total society, and most people act in the role of dependents."

9. M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*, Asia, 1965.

10. McKim Marriott, "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization", in Marriott (Ed.) **Village India**, Chicago, 1955

11. M. Singer, *Social Organisation of Indian Civilization*, Diogenes 1964

12. M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, California University Press, 1965.

13. C.A. Luard, *Alirajpur State Gazetteer*, 1908, p.1.

14. L.A. Despres, "Anthropological Theory and Complex Societies", *Current Authropology*, Vol. 9 (1), February 1968.

15. As mentioned by Marriott in the work cited above (10).

16. R. Redfied and M. Singer, "The Cultural Role of the Cities", *Economic Development and Culture Change*, Chicago, 1954.

17. Marriott, *op. cit.* and B. Cohen and McKim Marriott, "Networks and Centres in the Integration of Indian Civilization", *Journal of Social Research* Vol. I (1958), pp. 1-8.

18. J. Steward, *Theory of Culture Change*, Illinois, 1955.

19. F.G. Bailey, **Caste and the Economic Frontier**, (1958) and *Tribe Caste and Nation* (1960)

20. Srinivas (1952) and Srinivas (1965), *op. cit.*

21. Bailey (1958) *op. cit.* p. 5.

22. G. M. Carstair, "Bhil Villages of Western Udaipur, A Study in Resistance to Social Change" in M. N. Srinivas (Ed.) *Indian Villages*, Asia, 1955-60, pp. 68, 70.

23. M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and other essays*, Asia, 1962, pp. 42-62.

24. Marriott (1955), *op. cit.*

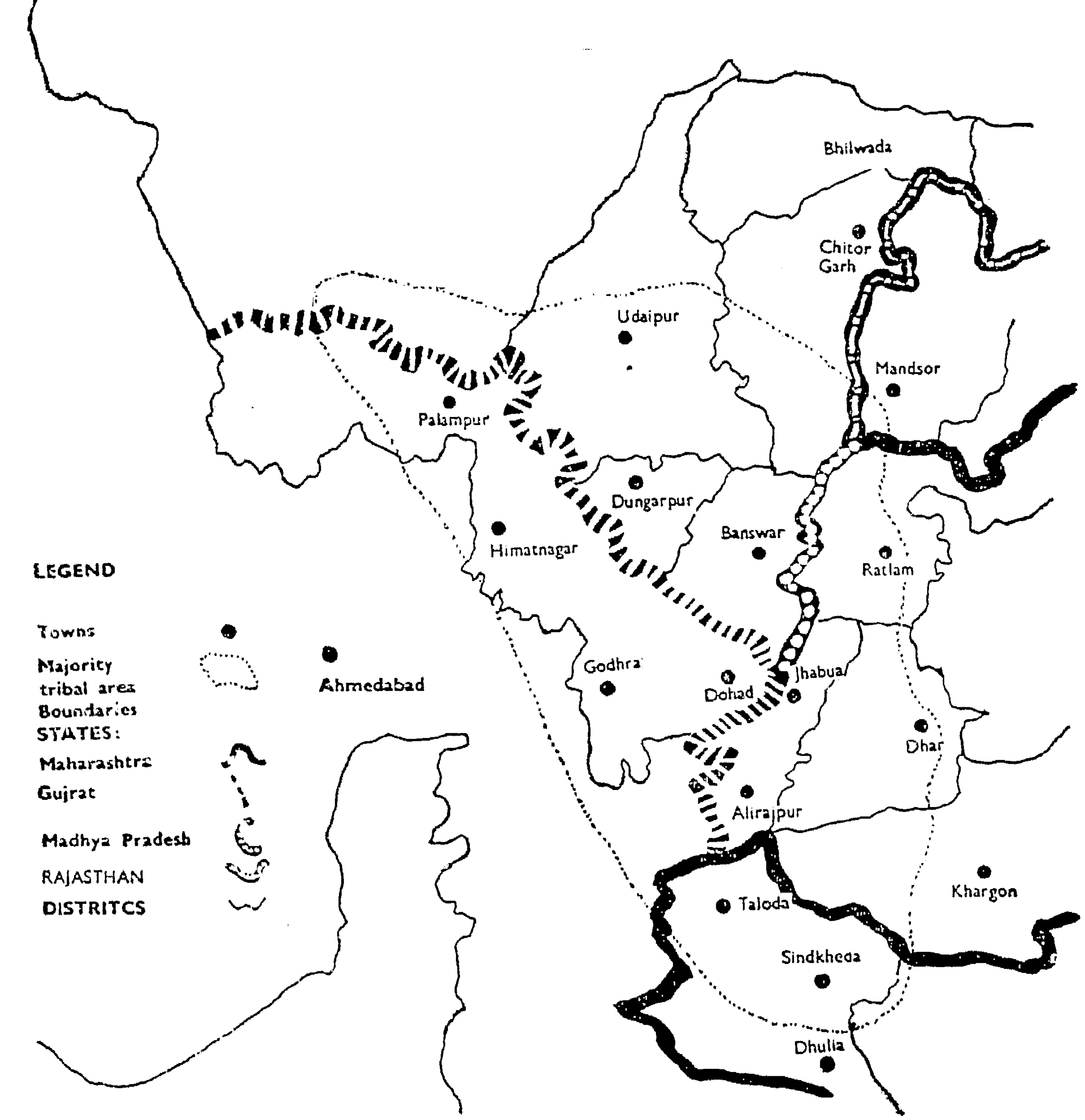
25. Srinivas (1952), *op. cit.*

26. Marriott (1955), *op. cit.*

BHIL COUNTRY

DISTRICTS WITH BHIL AND RELATED TRIBES

MAP 2



CHAPTER II

The Regional Community

I

The Satpura and Vindhya ranges which divide North India from the South are the home of a large number of tribal people. Near the western end of a the Satpura and Vindhya ranges live a number of related tribes who have all been known, at one time or the other of their history, as Bhils. But today not all the tribes of this (West Central Tribal Zone) are called so: neither do they prefer to be addressed as such. There are some (e.g. Rawat Meena) who were known until quite recently (1921 Census) as Bhils, but since then have refused to be addressed by that name.[1] As against tribes like the Todas and the tribes of the Andaman islands, the Bhils, Gonds and Santhals can hardly be considered as single tribes.[2]

II

Rajput influence is present in this region since, at least, the fourteenth century, A.D. It is difficult to tell what prompted the Rajput warriors to seek refuge in these inhospitable surroundings. Some conjectures, based on historical circumstances in the thirteenth and fourteenth century Rajasthan, give one clue. It is claimed by the royal family of Alirajpur that they belong to the famous house of Kanouj in Rajasthan, and are direct descendents of Jai Chand, the last king of Kanouj. Break-up of the house of Kanouj and its expulsion from its ancestral lands after the Muslim invasions could have been one reason for the dispersal of that family. However, whereas the senior branch of Rathors are still established in Kanouj the junior branches have abandoned that place permanently. In fact, the segmentation of the Rajput lineages is an important structural factor associated with the expansion of the Rajput influence in the tribal regions of

Northern India. Under the law of primogeniture the eldest son succeeded the father to all the anscestral domains and the younger brothers had to accept the positions of vassals. The junior members of the royal family were either granted estates (Jagirs) in the country or stayed on as close advisers and courtiers of the ruling monarch. In many cases these relatives remained satisfied adjuncts to the Rajas, but in other cases they found it more rewarding to venture into the tribal and unconquered hinterlands to establish their own principalities. Tod's history of Rajasthan is full of examples of principalities gained in battle or granted by the sovereign to his kinsmen. One such example is of Bhonsi of Chittor whose son Chandra "obtained an appenage on the Chambal, and his issues known as Chandrawats constituted one of the most powerful vassal clans of Mewar."[3] Principalities granted to these feudatories were very often in the interior regions of the crown territories where the tribal communities lived.

The *modus operandi* of the Rajput princes for establishing their hegemony over the tribals must have varied from one region to another, but there were some general similarities of approach which may be mentioned here. The first element in this approach was the establishment of an unquestioned military superiority. This was not too difficult for the Rajputs who had an ethos of a warrior caste to provide them with necessary confidence as well as skill to dominate the tribals. As against the democratic, "segmentary"[4] (in the Durkheimien sense) organisation of the tribals the Rajputs were organised on the principles of a centralised authority; so that they could deal with the organisationally weaker Adivasis with the greatest ease. One of the Bhilala Patels lamenting over the "lawlessness" of the Adivasis today said: "In the olden days even one Rajput in a village could impress the people; these days the Patels or officials are treated casually by them." It is mentioned by the historians that when Rana Pratap undertook the scorched-earth policy against the Moghals, he made free use of the sword to force the peasants to abandon their villages and retreat into the hills.[5]

Another tactics employed by the Rajputs was to select, from among the tribal chiefs, some persons to act as the repre-

sentatives of the Rajput authority in the tribal villages. For this service they were granted land by the Raja for their exclusive use. Besides they also received a certain commission based on the amounts of the land rents collected from the tribal farmers. In the earlier phases of Rajput domination they left the social organisation of the tribals untouched. Shah writes: "...In tribal areas there was, what may be called a superstructure of Rajput political system over the tribal political system, tribal chiefs forming the link between the two."[6]

As the Rajputs got settled in these areas gradually, the Moghal and other Muslim adventurers pursued them there as well. A few of the Muslim adventurers even joined forces with the ruling families and in this way became an active influence over the administrations of these princedoms. One such adventurer, a Baluch named Musafir Makrani played a crucial role in the history of Alirajpur.[7] A certain amount of bureaucratisation of the administration under the Rajas was probably introduced under the direct or indirect influence of the Moghal forms of administration. This was in contrast to the Rajput forms of political organisation in which kinship played a more crucial role.

Over a period of time the Moghals not only emerged as the most powerful factor in Indian power system, but also achieved a position of legitimate authority at the centre, and a source of legitimisation of authority at the lower levels.[8] In the Moghal form of administration the intermediate levels of administration consisted of *subas* (provinces) or princedoms, which paid tribute; and the lower levels were divided and subdivided into *sarkars* (districts) and *parganahs* (sub-districts).[9] This form of administration was adopted by the Alirajpur princedom around the latter half of the eighteenth century, when the capital of the princedom was moved from Ali to Rajpur by the bank of Sukher river. When the region passed under the tutelage of the British in the first half of the nineteenth century, not only was the tendency to further centralise the administration strengthened, on the same lines, but the system was even further elaborated and rationalised.

III

By and large, the Bhil and related tribal communities are concentrated over the adjoining districts of the States of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Table 1 gives the tribal and total populations of the districts where the Bhils or related tribes form a sufficiently large percentage of the total population of the district. Tribal and total figures of population are further sub-divided into rural and urban catego-

Table 1

Tribal and non-tribal population in Bhil districts [10]

State – District	Population		
	Total	Tribal	Percentage of tribal: total
RAJASTHAN			
Banswara	475,245	297,601	62.62
Dungarpur	406,494	244,782	60.22
Udaipur	1,464,276	441,710	30.01
Chitorgarh	710,132	129,645	18.24
GUJARAT			
Baroda	1,527,326	327,992	21.47
Panchmahal	1,468,946	503,214	34.02
Sabarkantha	918,587	128,085	13.94
MADHYA PRADESH			
Jhabua	514,384	435,793	84.72
Dhar	643,774	328,867	51.08
Western Nimar	990,464	400,343	40.42
Ratlam	483,521	58,113	12.02
MAHARASHTRA			
Dhulia	1,357,236	513,344	30.72
Jalgaon	1,765,047	98,710	5.57

ries. Udaipur (population 111,139), Ratlam (87,472) and Kota (120,345) are the only cities on the periphery of the Bhil country. There are, however, a number of small and medium-sized towns with populations usually well below 50,000, for example, Dhar (population 28,325), Badwani (17,446), Kukeshi (10,029), Alirajpur (10,161), and Jhabua (6,299) in Madhya Pradesh; Chhota Udaipur (10,829), Godhra (52,167), Idar (16,888), Palanpur (29,139) and Dohad (35,483) in Gujarat; and Banswara (24,850), Chitorgarh (16,888) and Dungarapur (12,755) in Rajasthan.[11]

These towns are centres of trade and commerce on the fringe of the Bhil country and relatively richer peasant hinterlands. Some of them like Ratlam, Jaipur, Udaipur have also a few industrial concerns. They link the producers of some of the most important consumer goods and the tribal consumers. For example, traders of Dohad and Ratlam get cloth from Indore and Ahmedabad some of which is supplied to Alirajpur. Again it is from Ahmedabad, Indore and Jaipur that much of the tinsel and beads, used by the tribals are brought to the towns, such as Alirajpur and ultimately find their way to the tribals. The flow in the other direction is also channelled through these towns. For example, timber goes through Chhota Udaipur, Mangoes go to Dohad and Ratlam ultimately to be converted into *amchoor* (mango powder) and *ampapad* (mango flat cackes), and Mahua flowers go to Indore and Ratlam to be distilled as Mahua liquor.

Beside these towns, there are also a large number of commercial villages dispersed over the country-side, where, at least in the central hamlet, there is a weekly bazar, run mainly by the non-tribal castes, but where the tribal sellers also come and set up their stalls. Some of the commercial villages have a very large proportion of non-tribals; but a majority of them have only a few non-tribal residents. In Alirajpur tehsil, 17 out of a total of 325 villages are commercial "villages", nine of them with sizable non-tribal population. I call these as commercial villages because they hold weekly markets, and provide various service and craft skills to the surrounding tribal population, in nearly the same manner as Alirajpur town. The non-Adivasi residential area usually has rows of shops on both sides of a lane. The

V

Before 1947, most of the princedoms were grouped under a number of administrative agencies of the Government of British India. These were Rewakantha Agency (Gujarat), Mevar Agency (Rajputana) and Bhopawar Agency (Malwa). Most of the rulers of these "native" States were Rajputs or claimed to belong to a noble Rajput clan. Each of the ruling houses has legends about ancestors who came and established their kingdoms over parts of this region. These legends, however, do not tell us much about the tribal peoples whom they subjected.

Conjectures about friendly relations between the Bhil tribesmen and their Rajput rulers are often based on a few prevalent rituals which require the participation of tribals in Rajput ceremonies. One ritual which is often quoted is the *Khoon ka tilak*, that was performed in the erstwhile "native States" of Banswara, Dungarápur and Alirajpur at the time of the king's coronation. According to this ritual a Bhilala subject belonging to the Patel family of Khandala had the privilege of making the *Tika* (vermillion spot on the forehead). In olden days it was made with blood from the gashed righthand thumb. To draw any conclusions about the past from this ritual would be wrong. One could however say that it was probably a symbol of the fact that Bhilala blood was necessary for the Rajput king. It is more definitely a symbol of the Bhilalas' complete loyalty to the king.

Generally, Bhils seemed to have not only submitted to the Rajput authority but also looked upon it as a necessary institution to settle serious disputes between feuding groups. The old Patel of Bamanta once mentioned this case: "One young Bhil of Kodli once went after a girl of our village. You know we Bhilalas cannot tolerate any such wrong. Some of our men one day caught the Bhil and gave him a proper thrashing. That very day Bhils got together to kill the men of our village who had beat their man. On that day the clash was somehow avoided with the intervention of the people of Lakhmani. But the Bhils continu-

ed to assault our men whenever they found them alone. You see the Bhils cannot say, 'alright we will pay our fines, give you a goat and a feast to the *Panchas* (elders)! We do not sit down and eat with them.' Ultimately the problem went to Maharaj, and he solved it for us. The girl's family was given compensation money (*Laj Rakhne'n Paisa*) and the incidence was forgotten".

VI

Two of the major types of Bhils mentioned by Y. V. S. Nath[13], are the Poliavla and the Langotia. The Bhilalas, Balais and other tribal *jatis* of the whole region too may be included in either of the two broad divisions. It must, however, be kept in mind that these divisions are based upon the differences in the "Hinduisation" of tribals' dresses in different parts of the Bhil country, rather than on some basic ethnic (tribal *jati*) variations. On the whole, I found the different tribal *jatis* forming an Adivasi sub-society within a cultural sub-region. In an extensive tour of the Adivasi areas in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, I noticed some major sub-cultures of the Adivasis, which incidentally, included Bhil and non-Bhil tribal communities. The enumeration of tribal sub-cultures detailed below is not exhaustive. I was unable to see many parts of the vast Bhil country especially the Bhils of Panchmahals and Khandesh. It is my observation that dress fashions play a very important part in stressing both the broad cultural continuity and discontinuity of sub-cultures within. The mode of dressing is a kind of idiom to express identity with certain groups *vis-a-vis* other groups, from whom a distinction is sought to be made. Throughout Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, as well as a considerable part of Gujarat, an Adivasi is in interaction in two inter-penetrating contexts, namely, within the tribal society and with the representatives of the broad stream of Indian culture as represented by Rajputs, Marathas or *vanyas*. The tribal's attitude towards them (the Hindu elements) is ambivalent. An the one hand he would like to identify himself with them and be considered one of them. This motive, both consciously and unconsciously urges him to Sanskritise his ritual and Hinduise his dress. But subsistence living conditions are hardly conducive to changing over from a

relatively cheap tribal dress to Hindu *dhoti* and *kurta* or taking over lavish marriage customs of the commercial Hindu castes. We may, however, say that probably by alteration in the allocation of resources an Adivasi may have been able to afford a change over to Hindu dress. But here we are confronted by the opposite demands of a context in which the Adivasi is in "dialogue" with other Adivasis. The "dialogue" is carried on in the traditional Adivasi idiom which imposes its own discipline, as the following quotation from my field diary shows: "There are signs that some of the men who have had some education at the government-run boarding schools (chhatravas) would prefer to leave their traditional slip loin cloth, but this is resented by those who see this as a sign of presumptuousness on the part of the young men. The Patel of Bamanta said 'if one of our boys wants always to stay in shorts, we will not let him into ourhouse'."

The young boy who has money may spend it on silver jewellery and on new waist coats (duglo) with more elaborate designs, but the *kosti* (loin cloth) which has become a symbol of tribal identity, in this region, of the community must not be given up. This is of course not to say that "urban Hindu" dress is never used by any "acceptable" Adivasi. The Patel of Bamanta who made the statement quoted above himself wore a summer style English jacket, a *dhoti* and an English style shirt whenever he was to meet an official. If individuals "speak" within a community a silent language [14] of dress and fashion, then different communities have their collective "languages" of dress. The tribals of Nimar who are relatively better off than those of Jhabua, Alirajpur (M.P.) and Kushal Garh (Rajasthan) generally wear *dhotis* and urban type of shirts and refer to their kinsmen among the Rath (Alirajpur people) as *langotia* (the loin cloth). In Nimar, the Bhilalas can afford to wear the same dress as the Hindu *jatis* and also a greater quantity of silver. Because men wear silver jewellery and special types of shirts all over the Adivasi country, they can be distinguished from the non-Adivasis. But the Adivasis of one sub-region are also distinguishable from those of other sub-regions by stylistic differences.

At the broadest level the tribal socio-cultural regions may be divided into the following :

Nimari	:	Khargone	Madhya Pradesh
		Kukshi	Madhya Pradesh
Gujarati	:	Panchmahals of Gujarat and adjoining areas of M.P. and Rajasthan	
Udaipuri	:	Udaipur and Dungarpur	
Banswari	:	Banswarn in Rajasthan	
Jhabuai or Langoti	:	Jhabua District and Kushalgarh Block of Rajasthan	
Khandeshi	:	Bhils of Khandesh (Maharashtra).[15]	

VII

The tribals of Pipal Khunt, Ghatol and Talwara blocks in Banswara district of Rajasthan speak a mixture of South Western Rajasthani and Gujarati. The dress of their men consists of an urban style of half-sleeved collarless shirt, a turban and a *dhoti* worn in such a manner as to cover just the thighs. When going out of the village they carry a sheathed sword. The women dress in the Rajput style, skirts (*ghagras*) and *lugdas* (stole). They are distinguished from the non-tribal *jatis* by their distinctive styles of wearing *dhotis* and turbans; and also because unlike the plainsmen their males wear silver jewellery. The dominant community of this region are the Rawat Meenas who claim that they are not Bhils but Rajputs. When one asks them the difference between themselves and Bhils they say—"Balais are Bhil, we are Rajputs. We have come down in status because our ancestors started practicing *Dever Batta* (levirate)". Despite this denial to be Bhils, Rawat Meena are culturally a community within the Bhil group. Like other Adivasis they practice adult marriage and marriage by elopement; show comparative unconcern about the chastity of women; have a similar system of inheritance, and most important of all, their clan organisation and that of the other Adivasis is similar. Lastly, their residen-

tial pattern is also not different from that of the other tribal *jatis*.

Culturally, the people of Bhukia, Bagidora, Garhi blocks of Rajasthan and the adjoining areas in Jhabua and Panchmahals are a middle group between the Adivasis of Jhabua Tehsil on the one hand, and the Rawat Meenas and allied tribes, on the other. The dominant community in this region are Bhil Meenas. While among the Langotia Adivasis a man must wear a loin cloth when at home, among the Bhil Meenas both *langoti* and *dhoti* are worn. In Garhi (Rajasthan), *dhoti* is no longer associated with the culture of urban *jatis* alone but may be worn by an Adivasi in the Rawat Style quite as frequently as the *langoti*. Bhil Meena women's style of wearing a skirt is different from the Rajput style but is the same as that of the Adivasis of Jhabua Tehsil. Its distinguishing feature is that their *Ghangra* is slit in the front and one end of the cloth is drawn from between the legs and tucked at the back while the other end is plaited and tucked at the navel.

In the Tehsils of Alirajpur, Jhabua, Jobat, Kathiwara (Madhya Pradesh) and Chhota Udaipur (Gujarat) the tribals are often referred to as *Langotias*. As compared to the Adivasis of Rajasthan (Banswara, Udaipur) and Gujarat (Ratanmal) they are less affected by the modern variety of local Hindu culture. As we shall see, they are not a single socio-cultural group but belong to a number of sub-cultures. The older and less acculturated among this whole group do not wear shirts but cover the upper part of their bodies with a sheet worn in the fashion of a cloak over the shoulder, the other shoulder being left bare. They carry either bows and arrows or a *palia* (long handed sickle) when travelling. The Adivasis of Dohad, Meghnagar, Thandla and parts of Jhabua are distinguishable by their extensive use of black or dark blue shirts. Normally they wear *dhotis* which cover their thighs. Their style of turban shows Marhatta influence. Men bedeck themselves with jewellery. Women often cover their legs and arms with copper or silver rings.

Largely concentrated in Thandla (Jhabua), Ratlam and Dohad but also dispersed over a large number of places in the Bhil country one comes across Patlias who maintain cultural

distinction between themselves and other Bhil, Bhilala and allied tribal *jatis*. Patlias however have a few cultural features in common with the tribals though it is, by and large, accepted by the local Hindus as a "Hindu" peasant caste. Their men's style of wearing the *dhoti* is the same as the North Indian Hindu's. They are fond of donning jewellery and wearing dark blue striped shirts of English style. Their turbans are worn in the local Adivasi fashion. Like the peasant Hindu castes they call a Brahmin to officiate at their marriages. We were informed at Garhi (Rajasthan) that they had started marrying off their daughters early. They do not practice levirate like all the other Adivasi castes. They claim that they are Patels who migrated from Gujarat a long time ago; their special variant of the local dialects contains more Gujarati words than those of the other neighbouring Adivasi *jatis*. Their main concentration is in Thandla Tehsil where they live in large hamlets and cultivate the fertile black cotton soil of Nimar. They are not only better cultivators than other tribals but also own more fertile land. On the whole, this community is richer than all the other tribal communities. Even when Patlia cultivators are seen living on higher altitudes, as compared to other Adivasi castes, they own relatively good and level lands while the Bhils cultivate the rocky and undulating hillsides. The material culture of the Patlias aptly illustrates how a community in order to be part of the larger society has to adopt certain traits expressing a broad conformity with its overt values, while at the same time strongly emphasising certain distinctive cultural features in order to project its own specific culture.

VIII

In the discussion up to now I have highlighted the variation within the tribal communities in the Bhil country. Now I would like to briefly present some features of cultural and structural similarity throughout the Bhil area. Firstly, although the dialects vary every few miles, basic fund of words has great similarity throughout the Bhil country. It is possible to understand most of the Bhil dialects if one knows one of them very well. Secondly, despite considerable variation in dress, the loin

cloth for men and the *Ghagra* (skirt) for women are common throughout the region. Even the Poliavla, that is, those who wear cotton sheet around their waist and thighs, also wear loin cloth when they are at home. Thirdly, maize and millets are the staple food of all the Adivasis in this area. The dishes prepared are also similar all over the country. Toddy and Mahuwa liquor are consumed by all the Adivasis except the Sanskritised Bhagats. Fourthly, agriculture is the main economic interest of the Adivasis and agricultural implements are also similar. The Adavasis of Rajasthan (Banswara and Dungerpur) use four bullocks to drive their carts and those of Madhya Pradesh have bigger bullocks and therefore need only two of them to pull their carts. Goats and fowls are kept by many tribals to supplement their income and need for meat. Fifthly, agriculture all over the Bhil country only partially fulfils the material needs of the Adivasis. To supplement their income they have to depend on trees, forest produce and on manual labour.

Let me now refer to some of the social, organisational features found in practically all the tribal communities in the region. Firstly, Adivasis all over the Bhil country live in dispersed localities. The hamlets composed of nearby houses is the most important unit of primary community. Secondly, the emphasis on nuclear family living and family self-sufficiency at the local level is well nigh universal. Thirdly, the average age at marriage of men and women is relatively higher than found among the non-tribals; women are married when they are around seventeen and the men around nineteen. Usually the newly married couple get a separate house to livein. However, the youngest son continues to live with his parents even after his marriage. In a few cases when a man marries more than one woman he may establish two households for the two wives. Even when married brothers live together with their parents, the nuclear family has a well marked existence. Fourthly, like caste-Hindus the tribals also practice Gotra or clan exogamy, and *jati* endogamy. Fifthly, women play, on the whole, a crucial role in the management of the family farm. The significance of women is brought out by such customs as adult marriage of women and bride wealth

rather than dowry. Sixthly, the institutions of junior leverate and ultimogeneture exist all over the "country". Some of the sub-*jatis* of Bhils explain their "degredation" from Rajput status on account of the adoption by their ancestors of leveratic marriages. Seventhly, pollution-purity idiom is employed by the Adivasis to explain relative status of rural *jatis*. Lastly, Adivasi economy, practically all over the "country", is an acutely deficit economy in which indebtedness plays a serious part. Indebtedness is closely linked with the fact that the monetary aspects of their economy are totally controlled and manipulated by the commercial elements in the "towns".

IX

Bhils, Bhilalas, Patlias, Balais and Mankars fall into a ritual status hierarchy headed by the Patlias followed in order by the Bhilalas, Man Kaurs, Bhils and Kotwals (Balais). The hierarchy is based on ritual distances between these *jatis*. Bhilalas do not take cooked food from either Bhils or Kotwals. Bhils refuse food from Balais and where there are some Chamars (Tanners), they do not accept eatables from the Balais and vice versa.[16] The usual reason advanced for this ritual hierarchy is interesting. In the words of an informant: "Bhilalas are superior because they neither kill nor eat cows. Bhils kill cows and eat beef. The Balais eat only the carcases of cows. Therefore, they are lower than the Bhils. The Chamars are lowest because they make shoes out of cow's hide". But the acceptance of this hierarchy by the "lower castes" is only half-hearted. The Chamars, who do not eat beef, often refuse to consider themselves lower than either the Bhils or the Kotwals. A Kotwal may say: "We after all only eat dead cows while the Bhils kill them".

The ritual distance between the castes is indicated by their attitude to beef eating. This obviously shows the influence of Hindu culture on the Adivasis. To some extent, the religious-ideological fact of the status hierarchy corresponds to the economic power position of various "castes" in the society. The Bhilalas are the largest land owners and occupy better land than

the Bhils, Balais or Chamars. This is in part due to the fact that the Rajputs, who were the rulers kept their women as *Paswan* (concubines). They helped their Bhilala "kinsmen" to acquire better type of land in the erstwhile princedom of Alirajpur. The Bhils as the original inhabitants of the land, have better land-holdings than the Balais and the Chamars. According to the local tradition, the Balais and Chamars are later immigrants to this part of the country. The Balais are dependent on the Bhils and Bhilalas for part of their income. The land they own was given to them by the State for their services as village guards or Kotwals. Besides this land they get four seers of uncooked food per plough from each land owner. In some villages (but not in Bamanta), the Kotwals supplement their meagre income by weaving *Kostis* or loin cloth for sale to the Adivasi communities. Balais also specialise in "blood-letting" to cure various types of muscular pains and fevers. Chamars and Balais are the most commonly available labourers in Alirajpur town and commercial villages, and on construction sites. Consequently, the two tribal communities are spatially the most mobile.

An interesting fact to notice is that both of these low *jatis* have a social structure very similar to that of the Bhils and the Bhilalas. Often even the names of their clans are the same as those of the Bhils and Bhilalas. For example, Bhaidya, Rawat, Ningwalia are common names of clans among the three tribes.[17] Bhils and Bhilalas, the two main communities, are not mutually interdependent. No caste among the Adivasis is considered "untouchable" insofar as, under normal circumstances, their touch does not pollute. However there are some restrictions on free intermingling of castes. A Bhilala does not go inside a Balai's house, and a Balai is not allowed inside a Bhil or Bhilala residence. Balais do, however, enter the courtyards of Bhils and Bhilalas. Bhils can enter the verandah of the Bhilala's house but not inside *(Gharma)* where cooking is done. Bhilalas cannot take water from a Balai's house. Bhils do not mind eating food served by the Bhilalas, but refuse it from the Balais.

When Balais and Bhilalas reside in the same locality, the conventions regarding exchange of labour *(Parji)* are applied without any discrimination to both of them. But the Balais do not call Bhilalas for Dhasia, since according to this system they are required to feed the persons who came to help them. They therefore call their caste brethern from the neighbouring villages if the extra labour is required. Balais themselves, of course, work on *Dhasia* for the Bhilalas. Friendships develop between Balais and Bhilalas. They may play together and pay visits to the markets and religious festivals. It may very often be noticed that a Balai young man dances in the same group with Bhil and Bhilala dancers. I have noticed a Bhil friend of the Bhilala bridegroom sitting with him in the *Potsal* of the bridegroom's house.

I have already noted how the Balai are expected to maintain a certain distance from Bhilalas and Bhils especially when a group of them is engaged in drinking or eating. According to the rules of ritual distance, which are not always followed, the Bhils must maintain a distance of one arm's length and the Man Kaurs two arms length from the Bhilalas during any ritual or commensal occasions. When people are asked to comment on the relative status of different *jatis*, their normative statements tend to express a neat hierarchical structure between the *jatis*. Behaviour patterns are, however, far more complex as the following quotations from the field notes show. The following is an extract from notes made during my visit to Bamanta in April 1963.

"About midnight Bhilala boys and girls were dancing drrra...(The dance does not require the accompaniment of drums.)...Then the group of Balais came with their drums and sat down in one group at some distance from Bhilala guests who sat scattered on the ridge. Balais demanded and got two pots of water, two bottles of Mahuwa wine and a large pot of toddy. All this they did not share with any of the Bhilalas. After some time the leading Balai drummer was called to the gate of the house...Both he and his drum were ritually saluted and sacrelised

by *Bohn-Bharjai* pair of *Arti-Walis*. (The sacrelisation is done with the help of bell-metal plate in which a small lamp burns. The plate also has some *Sindoor* (safron), a little *Ralo* (rice). Sacrelisation is done in this fashion. The older of the pair of *Artiwalian* places her hand over the younger partner. Both of them together apply a little *Sindoor* on the forehead of the drummer. This is done four times. Then a little of rice is picked on the finger tip and applied to the forehead in the same fashion four times. Hands are then extended over the burning lamp and taken into the head of the drummer in the gesture of a blessing. This too is done four times. This ritual is repeated for every drummer".

From the above quotation it is apparent that a certain distance between higher and lower is expressed in spacial terms. But this expression is in the nature of a symbolic act which is relevant in the context of a relatively static social situation. When the context changes and more dynamic interaction between the groups is implied, a transitory ritual altering the ritual status of the lower group is performed. The following extract from the field diary made in April 1965 illustrates the point: "At Remta's marriage his agnates from Kanpur village came with a group of Mankars. When the marriage party sat down to eat, the Mankars were made to sit in a row apart from the Bhilala guests. The food served to them was exactly the same as served to other guests. The persons serving them were Bhilalas."

In the above quotation a lower group is segregated for commensal purposes. But they are treated slightly differently from the Balais, who were allocated separate pots from which they served themselves. Balais are a servent caste and are therefore not served as guests, whereas the Mankars are not servents to Bhilalas, they are therefore treated as guests. As an illustration I quote again from my field diary (April 1965)· "Khacheru is a close friend of Remta. He works as a servent (*Pavar*) of Gulab Singh. His family stays in Kodli. Although I was told that Bhils are inferior to Bhilalas and they are not allowed to enter the inner room of a Bhilala's houses, I had

often seen Khacheru to enter Remta's room at his instance. When Remta sat down in the *Potsal* (varandah) of his house on a ritual vigil before his marriage, Khacheru sat with him. Next day, when the marriage party was about to depart for the girl's village a small group of Bhils from Kodli joined the party. From that time onwards, Khacheru was with them and he had his food with them, sitting apart from the Bhilalas and Mankars". From the above quotation one learns that an individual may behave deviantly and be not noticed, but the group structure has its logic and an individual usually conforms to that logic of inter-group behaviour.

In any specific sub-region the Bhils, Bhilalas and Balais do not have any difference in the form of their respective kinship organisation, religion, material culture, or language. The names of Bhil, Bhilala and Balai clans are often the same; which may either be explained as due to adoption, by the lower tribal castes of the clan names of the upper castes or their common origin. Whatever be the origin, for our purposes the significant point to note is that the tribal communities have co-existed for centuries and arrived at a common image of an inter-tribal society. This society is viewed by the tribals as ritually differentiated. The acceptance of the Sanskritic ritual criterion for status determination has helped them to be easily incorporated into the Hindu society. At the same time the tribal *jatis* are not fully identified with the caste society, nor do they identify themselves as usual caste Hindus. It is true that there are one or two clans who claim to be ritually purer than others. Dudwas, for example, do not eat fowls or eggs since the meat of the fowls is considered ritually lower than other kinds of meat, probably because fowls eat phlegm and insects. Again, in a few families we do find Brahmins acting as priests and genealogists. Patel family of Kodboo, for example, have their Gaud Brahmin genealogists. But, in Alirajpur, such cases are an exception. Adivasis are, on the whole, not greatly Sanskritised.

On the fringes of the Adivasi and non-Adivasi areas there are a number of castes who had been considered tribal in the

past. The most well-known of these are the Patlia and Koli. Kolis form almost one-fourth of the rural population of Gujarat and are a considerably important community in some Tehsils of panchmahals in Gujarat and Meghnagar in Madhya Pradesh. They have been almost completely incorporated in the Hindu caste system. Enthoven basing himself on Sir J. Malcom's authority writes: "The dividing line between them (Khandeshi Bhils) and Koli clans, on their borders, is a shadowy one. In the Panchmahals, Patlias, Ravelias and Barias are admitted into the Bhil tribe at the cost of a feast, and similarity of clan names among the higher Gujarat Kolis and Bhils closely indicates a common origion".[16] The interesting fact to be noted in this earlier account is that Bhils appear as a higher *jati* whereas Kolis are considered a lower *jati.* The situation has been reversed today. Caste Hindus recognise the Kolis as a Hindu clean caste. Barias are even today very closely related to Bhilalas. I have come across some persons from Mathwar who said they were Baria-Bhilalas. Barias are today more Hinduised than the Bhilalas of Alirajpur. Gradually, more and more of the richer families among the Bhilalas are taking to Brahmanic rituals. I was told that the marriage of the daughter of the Patel of Sejgaon village was conducted by a Brahmin priest. This was the first instance of this type in that village. Two facts of significance emerge from the juxtaposition of facts noted above; the vague boundaries beween neighbouring communities and shift in relative status over time as some of them become more Sanskritised as compared to others.

Among many of the Adivasi communities Sanskritisation has not advanced through their incorporation into the caste-Hindu society. It has advanced through, what are locally known as the Bhagat movements. These movements are centred around some of the charismatic leaders who introduced vegetarianism, teetotalism and worship of Hindu deities. One of the most widespread of these movements was started at the beginning of the twentieth century by a Banjara mystic called Gobind Singh. Another movement started from Alirajpur with a carpenter Harnam Singh as its leader.

Notes and References:

1. V. Furer-Haimendorf: Foreword to T. B. Naik *The Bhils : A Study*, Bharatya Adamjati Sewal Sangh, Delhi, 1956.

2. Haimendorf uses the plural "Bhil tribes" when referring to them; *ibid.*

3. James Tod, *Annals of Rajasthan*, London, 1914, Vol. 1, p. 212.

4. A simple society is one..."which does not include others more simple than itself" ... it ... "not only at present contains but a simple segment, but also presents no trace of previous segmentation". E. Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*, English trans. Free Press, 1938, p. 82.

5. Tod, *op. cit.*

6. A. M. Shah, "Political System in Eighteenth Century Gujarat", *nquiry*, Vol. 1 (1), Delhi, 1964.

7. C. E. Luard, *Alirajpur State Gazetteer*, 1908.

8. B. Cohen, "Political System in Eighteenth Century Central India", *Journal of American Oriental Society*. Vol. 82 (3), July–Sept. 1962.

9. Shah, *op. cit*, 1964.

10. G. Jagatpathi. *Census of India 1961 Vol. VIII Madhya Pradesh, Part II-A General Population Tables*, Manager Publications, Government of India, Delhi, 1963.

11. *Ibid.*

12. M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India, Asia*, 1965.

13. Y. V. S. Nath, *Bhills of Ratanmal*, M. S. University, Baroda.

14. E. T. Hall, *The Silent Language*, Doubleday, New York, 1959.

15 N. C. Jain mentions the following dialects of Bhils :

(1) Gujarati affected.

(2) Khandeshi affected.

(3) Rajasthani affected.

(4) Malvi affected.

(5) Nimari affected.

(6) Marathi affected.

(7) Western Hindi affected.

I am unable to corroborate the 6th and 7th dialects mentioned by Mr. Jain. Both Malwi and Nimari are dialects of Western Hindi. In fact, in Nimar, people speak a dilect which seems to be strongly affected by Rajasthani, Gujarati and Western Hindi. Khandeshi is a dialect of Marathi strongly affected by Malwi. "Rajasthani" spoken in Udaipur and parts of Durgapur has some resemblence with Malwi. Cf. N. C. Jain, *Bhili-Hindi Kosh* 1962, p. 5.

16. Stephan Fuchs, *Children of Hari*, Verlog Harold, Hague, 1950. Fuchs maintained that in Malwa Chamars were considered lower than the Balais although they admitted that originally the two castes were the same. The separation between them arose only because the Chamars continued to flay dead cattle when the Balais stopped this practice.

17. Fuchs gives us a very interesting explanation of the manner whereby higher community's clan names enter those of the Balais. This he says, happened when people of higher castes on losing their castes due to some reason join the Balais, but do not give up their Gotra names, Fuchs. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

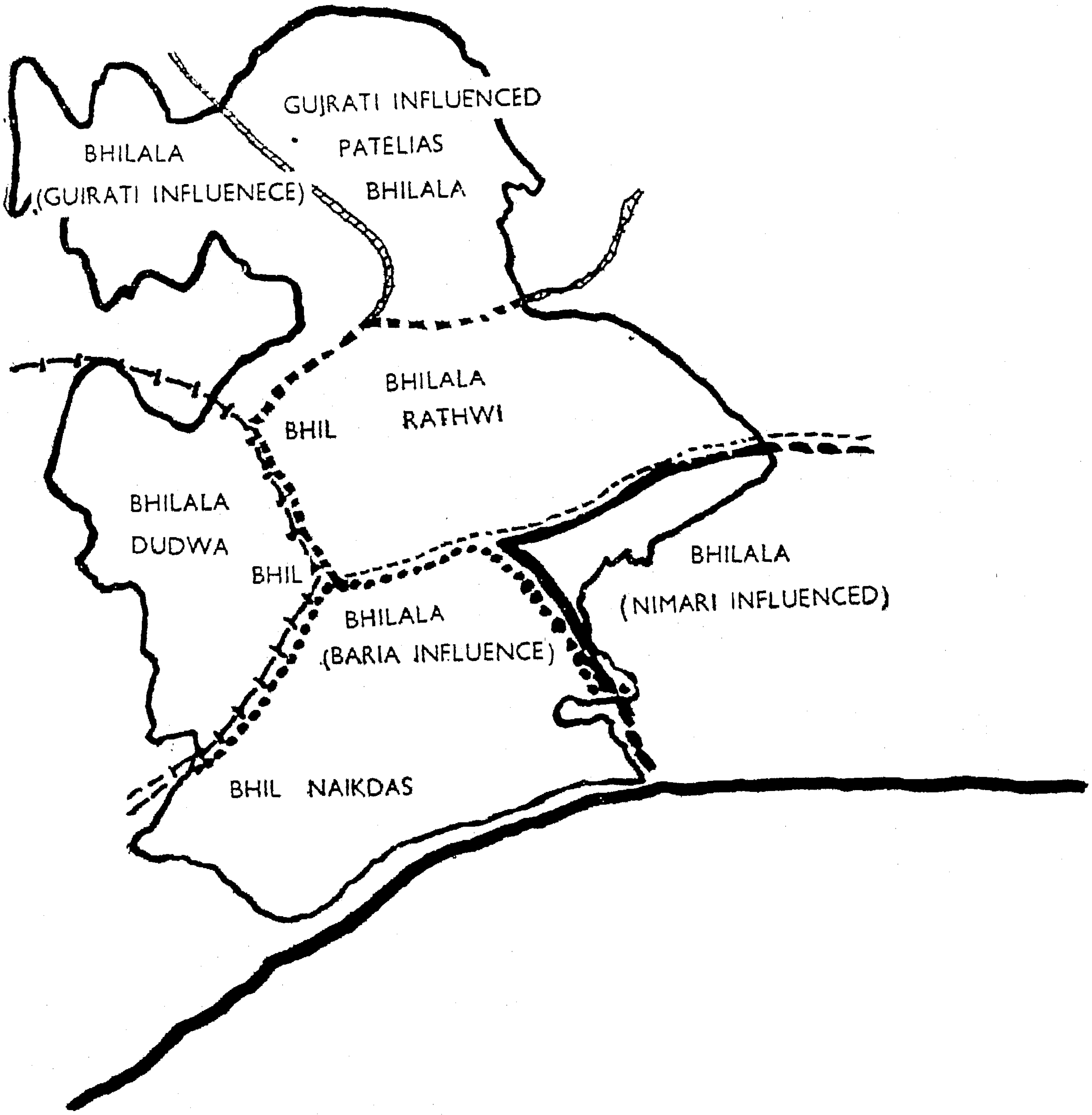
18. M. Enthoven, *The tribes and Castes of Bombay*, Vol. 1, Bombay, 1920, pp. 151-178. Basing himself on Sir J. Malcolm's authority he writes: "The dividing line between them (Khandeshi Bhils) and Koli clans on the borders, is a shadowy one. In the Panch-mahals, Patelias, Ravelias, and Barias are admitted into the Bhil tribe at the cost of a feast, and similarity of clan names among the higher Gujarat Kolis and Bhils closely indicates a common origin". About Bhilalas he writes: "Bhilalas are found at Dhamb, Vijaipur and Chirmira in Khandesh and in Nimar and Satpura hills. They claim to be Tilole Kumbs. But as the name shows, they are generally supposed to be partly of Bhil descent. In Central India they are half Rajputs. The chiefs of the Bhils in the Vindhya mountains are almost all

Bhilalas. The Raja of Mundlala an Island in the Narbada about sixty four miles from Bhusaval is a Bhilala chief. He claims descent from Chohan Rajput Bharat Singh who is said to have taken the Island from a Bhil chief in 1165. The Central Provinces Bhilalas are all decended from alliances with Bhils and take the name of Rajput clan to which they trace their origin". M. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, Vol. 1, Bombay, 1920, pp. 151–178.

ALIRAJPUR TEHSIL

SOCIO-CULTURAL REGIONS

Map 3



CHAPTER III

Alirajpur Tehsil

I

Alirajpur Tehsil lies within the Malwa Plateau on the Western extermity of the Vindhya ranges. The Tehsil has a common border with Gujarat in the west and Maharashtra in the south. In the extreme South-East, Narbada river forms, for nearly two miles, the boundary between the Tehsil and Badwani District of Gujarat. In the North the Tehsil has a common border with Rajasthan (see Map 2).

The Adivasi rhythm of life is geared to the cycle of nature. Spring (March) begins with *Bhagoria Hats* which culminate in Holi. The Holi days are referred to as *Gande Dihade* (foolish days) by the local people. Two market days before Holi are important. The market day, a fortnight before Holi, is called *Teharia Hat* or festival market, and the one just before Holi is called *Bhagoria Hat* or the eloper's market. These market days are festivals mainly for the young who attend the festivals dressed in their newest, and loaded with silver jewellery. On this day, colourful *Lugdas* (long sleeves), red and blue shirts, huge turbans, transform the generally dull look of the markets. Young men roam about purposefully to catch the eyes of the girls. The girls sit with their own age and sex mates outside the shops of their parents' *Sahukars* (traders), sometimes pretending to watch the bargains being made, and sometimes boldly eyeing the young men. *Pans* (betel leaves) are offered to friends probably on this day alone.

For the traders, these *Hats* (markets) are the tail end of their busy season. Gradually fewer people come to sell and buy. *Hats* following Holi are appropriately called *Ujadya Hat*, mean-

ing, literally, deserted markets. From this time onwards the Adivasi lives in his own shell sustaining himself, through the rigors of the hungry summers, on toddy and whatever else he can find. On the day of the Holi the buses very nearly stop their normal runs. When a few do dare to go out, groups of Adivasis stop them by blocking the roads and let them off only after extracting some money from the persons. Soon after Holi, the marriage season commences. Since this is a slack season for agricultural work people of Alirajpur have sufficient time to go to marriages and visit relatives.

Young men go to the forests to get wood for various purposes, such as ploughs, roof beams, wooden platforms to keep grass (*Mandva*) or stands to keep earthenware jars for storing water. For the domestic needs of the Adivasis the government allows a small quantity of wood to be hewn and brought to the village. For this wood they have to pay a nominal tax to the Forest Department. In case the *rabi* (winter) and *kharif* (summer) crops have been below normal, one can discern hunger and scarcity in April itself. During May and June, many poorer farmers and landless labourers go to road construction works opened by the district authorities to help out needy Adivasis. As water becomes scarce, grass for cattle is also less easily available. Bullocks are fed from the reserve stocks. But the cows have to find their own sustenance. Trips may be made to Kathiwara (Gujarat border) to obtain grass for the bullocks.

Throughout spring and summer, right up to the arrival of the monsoon, there is a steadily growing number of Adivasis who take headloads of grass, wood, leaves for fodder and bundles of *Mahuwa*, *Charoli* seeds or maize to the market centres. With the money obtained from the sale of these commodities, cheap foodgrains like minor millets (Sorgun Vulgares) are bought for the consumption needs of their families. The summer season is notorious for murders, thefts and highway robberies. But this season also has its social excitements and intense interaction because of abundantly available toddy or *Daru* (*Mahuwa* wine) and visits of relatives. Marriages also add to the general effer-

vescence of social life. Evenings are spent by the youth in merry making and dancing. With the rains the agricultural year begins in right earnest. Sometimes people have to go to the markets for seed but usually the farmer's family spends most of the time in hectic preparation for the sowing. During this period many visitors and social gatherings, are not welcomed. With the onset of winter, there is again a period of comparative calm in the agricultural work and some families have visitors.

II

Each major turn of the season is associated with a religious festival or a local ceremony. By and large, the Bhilalas follow the Northern Indian method of classifying time into lunar months. Their agricultural years, as over most of India, begins with the onset of the monsoons. In Alirajpur, the monsoon sets in around the end of June. *Devan Pujan* (worship of gods) takes place on the new moon night in the month of *Srawan* (July-August). On this day, the chief deity of the land called the Kumpalya, which literally means one who brings up the family, is propitiated jointly by the entire village. The *puja* is a turning point in the daily routine of the Adivasi's life. This day symbolises the onset of the season of hard work in the fields. From this day until the day of *Duda Puja,* which symbolises the harvesting season, no one will plaster the walls of the houses with cowdung. Instead it will be used as compost for the fields.

By August some of the early vegetables and pulses are ready for harvesting. *Navai* or "new crops" is the ceremony which ushers these new crops into the kitchens of the tribals. *Navai* is celebrated on the new moon day in the month of *Bhadra* (August–September). The major event of the day is the cooking of a vegetable broth with freshly-plucked vegetable and green pulses. The broth is ritually offered to the ancestors and consumed by the members of the family themselves. The ceremony symbolises the easing of the food situation in the house with the maturing of vegetable crops. In the month of *Kunwar* (October-November), *Malya Bap Deo*, the god of grain and wealth, is propitiated. The worship of the god is performed by the *Pujara*

(priest), late in the evening, after the moon has risen. The *Pujara* and other participants in the ceremony take baths to purify themselves. They assemble at a fixed spot somewhere in the fields. The spot where the god is supposed to reside is swept clean and watered. An unused earthen pot is then used by the priest to cook a dish with milk and maize on a contrived hearth. Small portion of this dish is offered to the god. After propitiation of the god the priest digs up a place where previously stones had been placed. The stones are brought out and counted. It is believed that if he finds more stones than were counted last year then the crop will be better; but if there are less number of stones this year as compared to the last, then the crop will not be very good. After this the stones are replaced into the pit and burried under loose earth. *Dudhya Rabdi* (gruel made with maize flour and milk) is then distributed among the participants and everyone returns to his home.

Exactly one month after the *Navai* ceremony, another one called *Duda Pujan* takes place. Like *Devan Puja* this ceremony dramatises an important change in the life of the Adivasi. With the maturing of the maize crop relatively opulent days begin after *Duda Puja* (propitiation of the cob). *Duda Puja* is a simple ceremony which is performed in the homes by the heads of the households in the presence of family members. The ceremony takes place next to the images of the household deity—*Ghirsari* and *Khatria Deo* (ancestral spirits). The head of the household applies vermillion spots near the drawn images of the deities. He also repaints the deities with his fingers, using vermillion coloured water. *Rabdi* is offered to *Ghirsari* and a little *Daru* (*Mahuwa* wine) to *Khatria Deo*. It is imperative that the person who propitiates the deities be married in accordance with the proper rituals of Bhilala marriage. If the head of the house has not undergone ritual form of marriage, then some other male from the family who has, can propitiate the deities.

After the *kharif* maize (monsoon maize) has been brought in, the millet and pulse crops also begin to mature. The harvesting of *kharif* crops continues up to the end of October when

some of the *rabi* (winter) crops may have to be sown. Winter crops, such as groundnuts and wheat have to be sown at the same time as the threshing of summer crops is completed. It is only with spring that the agricultural work slackens.

III

Dussehra festival (October or November - 9th of *Asoj-Shaka*) is common to practically all parts of India. But in each region the festival has its own flavour. To the tribals' *Dussehra* was the time when they came face to face with their Rajput rulers and a large number of the Raja's urban entourage. One week before the day of *Dussehra* festival the Raja and his entourage moved on to Ali—which is the ancestral seat of the family deity *(Chaumundi)*. For one week preparations were made for the annual court and feast. A *yagna* (long drawn propitiation of the gods) was held at the temple of the deity. Three days before *Dussehra* groups of tribals came from different directions, bringing with them sacrificial goats, and went around, beating drums to the gate of the palace. The patel was called to be present before the Raja when he presented some gift of money. After this the Patel returned to his group of villagers and led them to the gates of the temple. At an appointed place near the temple the goats were sacrificed and the Adivasis retreated to their camps to cook and have their feasts. The rations of cereals and spices were issued to them by the court storeman (*Bhandari*). A feast was also held inside the palace where townsmen, traders, civil servants, guests of the State, elders of different castes, including various leaders of the tribals, were all seated on the ground to have their meals. The Raja and his close associates sat together in a separate place while commoners were asked to sit in such a manner that the higher caste people were served first and the lower castes later. There was often tension between castes, who were roughly equal in ritual status—each one of whom wanted to "sit above" the other. The feasts went on for three days. In one of the ceremonies *(Kanwar Patla)* held on the day of *Dussehra* bull-buffaloes were sacrificed at the temple of *Chaumundi* by the Raja and occasionally by bigger Jagirdars. Meat of the sacrificed animals was used at the feasts. On the

day of the *Dussehra* a court was held at which the Raja personally distributed turbans to the Patels, Tadwis and Jagirdars. The turban was and still is a symbol of respect (*Adar*) and prestige. When the Raja gave the turban to the Patel, etc, he symbolically renewed his trust in him as a responsible official of the court (*Durbar*).

These days *Dussehra* is celebrated by the townsmen in the same style as all over Northern India and the Adivasis come to watch the effigy of Rawana being burnt. But the Adivasis do not participate in the festival with the same spirit as before whereas the feudal leaders emotionally incorporated the Adivasis within the social and ritual system centred around the Raja, the townsmen include the Adivasis as spectators rather than active participants in the ritual complex of the festival.[1]

On the whole, between autumn and spring is a relatively easier time of the year for the Adivasis. The *karif* as well as *rabi* harvests are brought in during this period. The Adivasis join the general Hindu population in celebrating many Hindu festivals. Around the same time as the Hindu festival of *Rakhi,* a festival called *Pithwara* is celebrated by the tribals. Unlike the Hindu festival of *Rakhi*, which emphasises brother-sister relationship, *Pithwara* expresses unity of the affines. For two days people from nearby villages gather in a *mela* (fair). The *Jamains* (sister's and daughter's husbands) bring to their affines sacrificial goats, and dance and feast there. *Deevali*, the Hindu festival of lights, is also celebrated by the Adivasis. Like the Hindus, the Bhilalas also consider this festival to be especially connected with the material welfare of the family. Another minor family festival follows some fifteen days after *Deevali.* It is called *Nanhli Deevali* or small *Deevali.* This festival is celebrated by some persons who had undertaken vows at the shrine of the deity *Bhabhasta Kohadia* that they would light lamps on this day or sarifice clay "horses" at their shrines. Another semi-religious festival which takes place occasionally during the winters is called the *Ind* (the festival of Indra). This festival is held sometimes by the people of some villages where

such festivals have been traditionally held. The information that the festival will be held is spread through the regions through various affinal and kinship networks and large number of Adivasis flock to this festival from far off.

IV

Generally speaking, the land of the villages in most of Alirajpur is rocky and uneven. The Administrative report of Alirajpur State for 1939–40 says: "About half the area of the State is under forests, of which 289 square miles are under reserved forests and 149 square miles under unreserved forests".[2] The actual area under forests today, however, is anybody's guess since every year large tracts of forest lands are being denuded and added to the cultivated plots. The nearest forest to Bamanta is about 15 miles to the South near Kanpur village. Good land is extremely rare. There is however no dearth of the so-called cultivable land. The average cultivable land per family is 15.3 acres.[8] The land is more suited for plantation of trees than cultivation. But a sign of acute presssure of population on land is that even the sub-marginally productive land is being brought under cultivation.

The most cherished asset of a Bhilala cultivator is the land around his house. Usually the houses are built on higher ground so that the fields nearest to them slope towards the ridge like banks of the streams running close by. Hard and constant labour is spent on these plots of land to make them as fertile and level as possible so that the staple crop, maize, may grow well. In the rest of the cultivable land usually minor millets and pulses are sown. The sloping fields are bunded with earth or stones. The flow of loose earth during the rains from the higher to the lower side somewhat levels the fields within a few rainy seasons. Ploughing is usually done parallel to the bund which helps to preserve the moisture in the field a little longer. Ordinarily, the tree groves are around the "valleys" of the streams where the land retains moisture for a longer period after the rains. The trees are also grown near the houses for shade or fruit, or both, and they are specially watered until they have sunk deep roots.

Some of the *jatis* in the tribal region are more acutely affected by dearth of land than others. Data about the distribution of landholding for the two major landholding tribal *jatis* (Bhils and Bhilalas), in Madhya Bharat region are available from R. Saxena.[4]

Table 2

Land Ownership Pettern Among Bhils and Bhilalas in Madhya Bharat Region, Madhya Pradesh

Tribe	Less than 5 acres	5–10 acres	11–15 acres	16–20 acres	21– acres
Bhil	22.8%	26.1%	32.6%	13.6%	5%
Bhilala	24.6%	25.5%	28.0%	14.7%	7.2%

It is obvious that there is no significant difference between the Bhils and Bhilalas as far as the land ownership is concerned. Balais, who are defined as a scheduled caste, but are in fact a part of the rural society in the tribal regions as well, are without much land in Bhil and Bhilala ragions. Same is the situation as far as Chamars are concerned. Bhils and Bhilalas are the ancient owners of most of the land. Whatever land the Balais own is usually given to them in return for their sevice as village guards (Kotwal). The Chamars are found in some of the villages. They were brought into the area by the Rajput Jagirdars from the plains to till their fields and work for them. In due course they shifted to other villages where they were able to secure some of the "newly broken" *(Nav Tor),* virgin soil. On the whole, however, both Balais and Chamars have much less cultivable land. They are therefore more dependent on wage labour wherever they can find it. Chamars and Balais are the most commonly available workers in Alirajpur town, the commercial villages and the construction sites. Consequently, these two tribal castes are spatially the most mobile communities.

V

The total population of Alirajpur Tehsil is recorded as 130,263 persons by the 1961 Census;[5] of this 120,102 (92.3 per cent) is rural and 10,161 "urban". Urban is defined by the Census in terms of the municipal status as well as the occupational pattern of settlement. But the Census tables have in fact taken only Alirajpur as a town in Alirajpur Tehsil, thus completely ignoring urban localities with population below 5,000.[6] The total area of the Tehsil is 868.7 square miles. Density of population per square mile is thus calculated as approximately 138 persons.

About 84 per cent of the population of the Tehsil are Scheduled Tribes and about 6 per cent Scheduled Castes. About 10 per cent of the people therefore belong to non-Tribal and non-Scheduled caste communities. These communities are most probably urbanised Hindu and Muslim *jatis*. Let us try to estimate their number in the urban and rural areas.

Table 3

Scheduled Castes, Tribes and "Clean" Caste Population Among Rural and Urban Categories in Alirajpur Tehsil

		Percentage
Total population (Rural)	120,102	100
Rural Scheduled Castes	6,922	6
Rural Scheduled Tribes	108,301	84
Residue of Clean Caste Hindu and Muslim Jatis	4,879	10
Alirajpur Town Population	10,161	100
Its Tribal Population	1,283	12.6
Scheduled Caste Population	799	7.8
Residue of Clean Caste and Muslim Population	8,179	79.6

Table 4

Workers by Census (1961) Classification of Categories Divided into Urban and Rural (Alirajpur Tehsil)

Categories (workers)	Urban	%	Rural	%
1. Cultivators	350	11	61074	89
2. Agricultural workers	51	2	2712	4
3. Mining, Quarrying, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantations, etc.	86	3	2076	3
4. Household industry	426	13	726	1
5. Manufacturing other than household	215	7	97	–
6. Construction	154	5	49	–
7. Trade and Commerce	623	19	485	1
9. Transport, storage and communication	92	3	17	–
9. Other services	1225	38	1404	3
Urban workers = 3222	Non workers = 6929			
Rural workers = 68640	Non workers = 51462			

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol. VIII, Madhya Pradesh Part II–A, General Population Tables, 1963.

Note : Percentages are rounded off to the nearest whole number.

It is obvious that Alirajpur town is of over-whelming importance to all the non-scheduled caste and non-tribal *jatis*. Most of these *jatis* are either fully or partially engaged in servicing, trade and commercial retations with the tribals and may be termed commercial *jatis*. They form a little less than 10 per cent of the population. Table 4 shows the "working" population

in various occupational categories in rural and urban areas.[7] A little less than 89 per cent of the rural workers are cultivators. On the whole, land is not too scarce and it is always possible for an enterprising farmer to squat on some of the available virgin land. This is probably the reason why only 4 per cent of the workers are landless labourers. The rural persons engaged in household industries may belong to any of the following occupational groups :

1. Tribal weavers (mostly Balai). 2. Gujarati and Nimari potters, 3. Tribal blacksmiths, 4. Non-tribal carpenters (Khati); 5. Non-tribal masons (Kadia); 6. The shoe markers (*Chamars*); and 7. Adivasi potters (*Man Kaurs*).

All of them together form merely 1 per cent of the work-force. As many as 485 persons engaged in trade and commerce in the rural areas are dispersed over 25 centres of trade and commerce of varying importance all over the Tehsil.

VI

The majority, that is, 56.3 per cent of the total population of Alirajpur Tehsil belong to the Bhilala tribe. Bhils are only about 34.2 per cent of the total tribal population of the Tehsil.[8] On the whole, the culture varies with territory though there are minor differences between Bhils and Bhilalas within a single cultural sub-region. It is generally said that language in this part of India changes every ten Kms (about twelve miles). This may be taken as generally true. Systematic observation and enquiry, however, suggests that it is possible to state something more tangible than that about the sub-cultural areas within Alirajpur.

Alirajpur Teshil has four major tribal sub-cultures. The space covered by joining Khattali, Nanpur, Ali, Chanpur, and Ambua with a line will more or less encompass an area which is known by the ancient name of Rath and its people by the name of Rathwa. In the Western and South-Western area beyond Chanpur and Ali, the people are considerably influenced by Gujarati language and culture. They are known by the name of

Dudwa. Beyond Hathni river, towards Nimar, Nimari influence has affected the Bhilalas considerably. The Bhilalas of Rath have affinal relations with the Nimari Bhilalas. But whereas the Rath women are married into Nimar, the Nimaris rarely marry off their daughters to the Rathwas. Because of close cultural and affinal bonds between the Alirajpur Bhilalas and Nimari Bhilalas, they have often been included into the Rathwa group.[9] South of Ali, towards Mathwar is the Baria-Bhilala area. Barelas are a tribal community in Gujarat and also in Nimar (Sondwa Tehsil; Barwani District), and the Baria Bhilalas are closely related to them.[10] Baria Bhilalas rarely marry into Rath. Each of the sub-culture areas is a quasi-primary community in the sense that people are often acquainted with the customs and traditions within their own sub-culture area, speak roughly the same language, have the same style of dressing, and usually marry within the same area.

In each area similar fashions prevail which make people of each of these areas visibly distinct from those of the other areas. Alirajpur is one of the central marketing towns of the tribal region and Adivasis from all these sub-culture areas come here. The cloth merchants of the town sell specific coloured and printed cloth to people from each of these communities. For example, black and dark blue coloured prints are worn by the Rathwa tribal women. The *Kosti* (loin cloth) of Rath men has brick coloured border. For the Dud Adivasis the most popular colour schemes for male dresses (turbans, shirts and loin cloth) are yellow and green, for women's dresses the popular colours are pink to red. Besides displaying a considerable cultural uniformity the area's sub-cultures also show a degree of structural unity. The tribal lineages have their affinal ties mostly within these sub-culture areas, though as already mentioned, there is usually a flow of women from poorer to relatively more opulent neighbouring regions, e.g., from Rath to Nimar and from Dud to Baria, from Kathiwara to the environs of Chhota Udaipur and from villages East of Alirajpur to those towards the West.

VII

The Bhilala villages are generally more prosperous than the Bhil villages. Bhilalas are today far more committed to agriculture than the Bhils who depend to a far greater extent on forest produce, such as Mahuwa flowers and seed *(Doli)* and on sale of bamboos, grass and leaves for cattle feed, and wood for fuel. There are mixed Bhil and Bhilala villages also. Invariably, the Bhilala families are more prosperous and better agriculturists even in these villages than the Bhils. The economic interest of the dominant community is not the only factor to distinguish one village from another; other factors, notably the geographical location of the village, also affect its aconomic and even social structure. There are many villages which are situated either right in the midst of the forests or very close to them. No villages are too far away from the forests. The tribals who live in or near the forests naturally exploit them as at least one important source of income. This partial dependence on forest produce makes these villagers relatively indifferent farmers.

When a village is located near a rich Mahuwa grove, or sagwan forest, it is in a strategically important position *vis-a-vis* other villages which are far away. Any poaching of wood or gathering of grass in the forest requires help from the local people. Those who have kinship ties in these villages can get help from relatives as regards the "safe" place (safe from forest guards) of exit from the forest. Often the local relations can give food and shelter at night after their relatives have spent a hard day at picking Mahuwa, cutting wood or gathering grass. Usually, the village communities near the forests are poorer than those which have access to vast tracts of farm land, but this does not affect the marriage alliances between the two types of villages. Contrary to what one would normally expect, villages near the forests have quite a widespread affinal ties as the villages close to the commercial centres.

The difference between the livelihood pattern of the "foresters" and the "farmers" cannot be considered to be an absolute one. Even those who are far away from the forests are depen-

dent upon the trees for a significant portion of their income, and even the so-called "foresters" are primarily agriculturists and only secondarily "foresters".

Besides other ways of classifying, the villages can also be classified in terms of their status during the Raja's regime. Under the administration of the Raja, the villages were divided into three types: Rayatwari, Jagirdari, and Inami and Charity (Dan). The Census of 1941 of the princedom gives us the following information about the three types: Inami villages 14; Jagir villages 31; Charity villages 10; Rayatwari Villages 227. In Rayatwari villages the land revenue was collected directly from the cultivators. Lands in some of the villages were given as Jagirs to close friends, relations and supporters of the rulers from within the tribal families. The Jagirdars did not have to pay land revenue to the State ; but they did give presents to the Raja as a mark of their fealty. The Inami villages were granted to those who had served the *Raj* in some special way. For instance, the four generation removed ancestor of the Goswami Guru of the Raja was granted a village in recognition of "sacrificing his head" *(Mundhka Katai)* for the *Raj*. (The document which mentions this deed, does not explain the circumstances in which this sacrifice had taken place). The charity villages were given to Brahmins and temples. The inami and charity deed holders of the village lands had to pay land revenues, but at lower rates than the rayats did. Since the abolition of the system in 1951, the Jagirdars have been reduced to the legal status of owner-cultivators, and their erstwhile tenants have also become owner-cultivators. However the Jagirdars still remain by far the largest land owners in their villages. Today the only difference between the Jagiri villages and other villages is a relatively more advanced and commercialised form of agriculture practiced by the Jagirdars on their lands. The Thakar of Sondwa for example maintains a very good mango orchard. Jagirdars and their servants have probably some importance as channels of communication between the more advanced cultures surrounding the Bhil country and the tribals with whom they live. The role of Jagirdars and Patels as

agents of culture change is discussed in another section.

VIII

One out of every ten or more villages is a commercial centre for the surrounding countryside. These commercial villages are usually located on or near one of the highways winding through the thinly populated land. These trading villages are normally situated on relatively lower grounds as compared to the Adivasi (tribal) country surrounding them. Even where they are not located on level land, as in the case of village Kathiwara, there are level grounds close by. Many of these commercial villages were also the headquarters of minor or major Rajput Jagirdars of the surrounding area or minor administrative centres. Usually each commercial village has a central residential–cum–shopping locality. A majority of these villages, however, have only one marketing centre with a few shops and houses. All the hamlets around this centre are inhabited by the tribals.

Most of the commercial villages have *Hats* on one day of the week . On the day of the weekly market, temporary stalls are set up. The wares sold at the *Hat* are often the same sold in regular shops ; but usually these wares are of a cheeper variety. Some of the stall-holders at the *Hats* also have permanent shops. Some of them are itinerant traders who retail wares at many such *Hats* in the Tehsil. I quote here from my notes on one trader named Bheru to illustrate : "Bheru is seen with his *Sev* and *Ladoos* at Alirajpur on Monday, at Khatali on Wednesday and at Nanpur on Saturday. On rest of the days he prepares his stuff for the *Hats* and very occasionally sells to a few Adivasi customers who come to his house asking for supplies". At one of the *Hats* at Alirajpur I noted the following kinds of stalls: cloth cut-pieces ; *Kosti* (loin cloth) ; Balai sellers sitting by the side of the lane, their wares placed on a cloth spread on the ground ; tatooers with their little battery run machines surrounded by young Adivasi girls and boys ; glass, beads, allumi- nium glasses and plates, scarves made of bright cheap cloth and other nick knacks; spurious silver jewellery; onion; green grocers; spice vendors with paper bags of spices placed in a round cane

basket: saltish tit-bit sellers, selling often a day or two old Bhajia, arranged in small heaps on a jute sheet spread on a *Charpoi*;*Laddoos* (sweet balls) made from cheap maize flour and sugar of jaggery; indigenous medicine seller; Baniyas with sheets of jute cloth spread on the ground purchasing and selling maize, Mahuwa, groundnut, Jowar, etc, (The purchases are piled on the sheets); Adivasi selling fowls—just standing with a jute bag with chicken tied in it; Adivasi selling goat, another selling a cow; an Adivasi blacksmith selling iron implements; Chamars selling tyre rubber chappals; dried fish sellers; Adivasi potters with crudely made hot plates and bins."

Tne bazar where the weekly markets take place are sanctioned by the authorities. Permission to set up a stall is granted by the village Panchayat or for Alirajpur *Hat* by the municipal authority. Regular stall-holders have conventionally allocated places for their stalls. Commercial villages are inhabited by many castes, the majority of which are engaged in one kind or another of trade. There are also a number of servicing castes. The ritually lower among them live in separate lanes or neighbourhoods (*Bastis*) of their own. Occasionally one may also come across multi-caste villages with mixed tribal and non-tribal farming castes. In Bhukia Block (Banswara district, Rajasthan), there is a village called Charanwada. It is today a mult-caste village with a few families of Banias, goldsmith, Chamars, barbers, Nath cultivators, Rajputs and a large number of Bhils. According to one of the accounts, the trading castes are later immigrants to the village. The village seems to have been occupied first by the Rajput Jagirdar, who came along with some Nath cultivators and Chamar servants. Over a number of generations other castes joined the original settlers. Some of the Bhils joined the village population as *Sagris* (debt slaves) of the caste-Hindus. It is interesting to record here that even the Rajputs give out loans to Adivasis on exhorbitant interests. Rajputs have many Bhil *Sagris*. Pressure of population in the plains and penetration of Rajput political power have contributed to the creation of these commercial and farming Hindu communities in the midst of the tribal country. In these villages we find the tribal popu-

lation reduced either to the status of debt slaves[11] (as in Rajasthan) or driven to eke out their extistence from the less fertile hilly and rocky lands. Such villages may have one central nucleated *Basti* where the Hindu commercial, farming and servicing castes live in their separate lanes, and a number of small hamlets or dispersed homesteads of the tribals are located a little way from this central *Basti.* The servicing and trading castes of these muliti-caste villages not only serve their own villages but also the surrounding tribal country. The multi-caste villages have become important loci for radiating urbanisation and other culture complexes of the wider civilization.

The origin of most of the markets is in the misty past, but the fact that these bazars were in some ways related to the "power" relations between competing villages, is brought out by some customs. Nanpur village is located almost in the middle of two villages, Dholkhera to its north and Maurasa to its south. At the time of the Annual *Bhagoria* (before Holi) market the people of the two villages gather at the head of the main bazar. They come with their drums, and it is said that in the olden days they used to come fully armed. It is the convention that as the sun reaches its zenith a procession of the tribals headed by their drummers passes through the market followed by the tribals. The representatives of the trading community are expected to give the drummers gifts of money. The two drummers who belong to the two villages go shoulder to shoulder in one line at the head of the procession. If any one of them tries to go ahead of the other, clashes between the two village people take place. Market place is seen in this case, as a tradititional arena of competing tribal groups. The custom of giving money to the tribals symbolises reciprocity and interdependence between tribals and the market people. It is interesting to note that during Holi—*Gande Dihade* (Fools days) — the Adivasi (who is often addressed as *Ganda*) has the conventional freedom to waylay the non-Adivasi traveller and demand money from him.

My enquiries from the traders of Chhaktala and walpur markets convince me that at least in some cases the institution

of the market (weekly bazar) preceded that of the commercial village. Chhaktala, for exemple, is known to have the weekly market since known-times, but all the permanent traders are immigrants of at the most four or five generations ago. My informants tell me that about forty or fifty years ago there was no market at Kadwal. People used to go across the native States boundary in to Gujarat to do their weekly Hat. Raja specially announced and got a market started at Kadwal so that the money of the State remained in the State. In the beginning there were no permanent residents of trading castes in the village but gradually a few of them settled there.

IX

Alirajpur is well planned, with wide lanes and *pukka* drainage channels lining both sides of its lanes. most of the lanes are either paved with bricks or tarred. In Alirajpur one finds commercial and servicing castes from all the major neighbouring regions, such as Nimar, Marwar and Gujarat and Malwa. From these regions many servicing castes have also come and settled down in Alirajpur. Table 5 gives the details of the thriving servicing and trading *jatis* in Alirajpur today.

X

Alirajpur *town* has been maintaining close commercial links with some of the towns in the Bhil region. Towards its south–east, about 32 miles away is a town called Chhota Udaipur (Gujarat). It was the capital of the erstwhile Indian princedom of the same name. Alirajpur is connected with it by a good tarred road. In the northern direction right on the borders of Panchmahals of Gujarat is the large commercial village of Kathiwara. A forest road connects Kathiwara with the Chhota Udaipur, Alirajpur road. In the south–east, well-laid metalled road wends towards Kukshi, another town of roughly the same size as Alirajpur. Alirajpur, Chhota Udaipur, Dohad, and Kukshi have very ancient business and social ties with each other. Of these towns, Alirajpur is the smallest, but from the point of view of trade and commerce not the least important. It is one of the largest suppliers of commodities, such as mango, Mahuwa flowers, Mahuwa seed, groundnuts and forest produce, such as

ALIRAJPUR TOWN

MAP 4

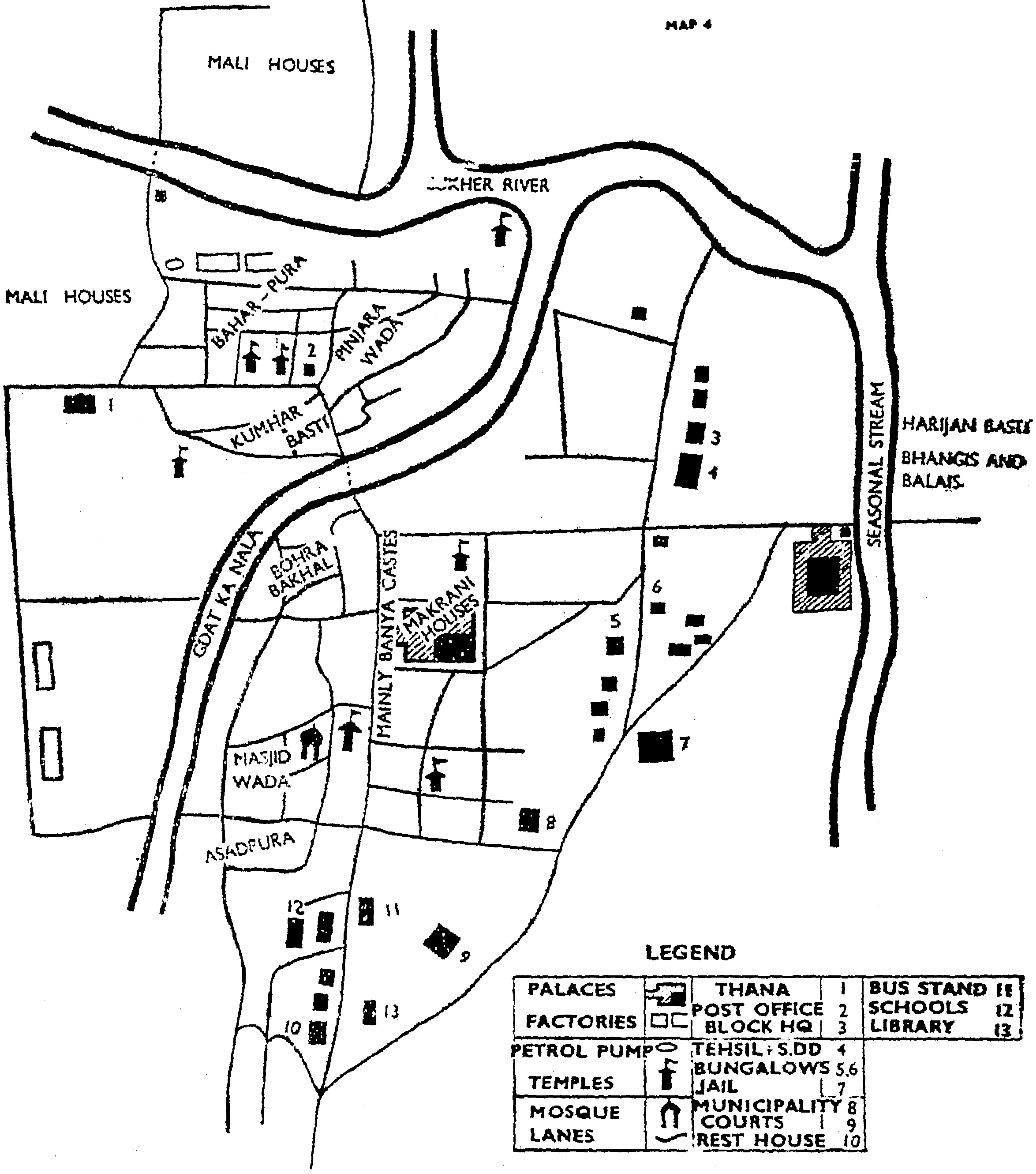


Table 5

Jatis in Alirajpur Town

Jatis	*Traditional Occupation*
1. Asada	Trade and service
2. Balai	Labouring
3. Bhoi Kahar	Roasting gram & groundnuts etc
4. Kahar	-do-
5. Dhobi	Washerman
6. Kumhar	Potter
7. Luhar	Blacksmith
8. Mali	Vegetable gardener
9. Nai	Barber
10. Sikligar	Nomadic blacksmith
11. Sunar	Goldsmith
12. Sutar	Carpenter
13. Teli	Oil miller
14. Bania	Shopkeeper
15. Bohra	Muslim Shopkeeper
16. Deshawali	A sub-caste of Bania
17. Jain	Shopkeeping
18. Bhisti (Muslim)	Waterman
19. Faquir (Muslim)	Mendicant
20. Ghanehi (Muslim)	Oil miller
21. Luhar (Muslim)	Blacksmith
22. Makrani (Muslim)	Police, forest, govt service,
23. Mewati (Muslim)	
24. Pinjara	Cotton carder
25. Rangrez (Muslim)	Dyer
26. Sindi (Muslim)	

wood and lac. Traders come to Alirajpur from as far as Indore, Ratlam, Baroda and occasionally from towns still farther away, mainly to purchase mangoes, dried Mahuwa flowers and groundnuts. Whereas all the other towns mentioned above are located in the plains, Alirajpur is the major centre to reach the heart of the Adivasi region. Alirajpur has the distinction of being the largest town in Jhabua district though it is not the district headquarters. Jhabua, the district headquarters, is much smaller in size and population and commercially it has also not been as important as Alirajpur. The Alirajpur market, being the sub-divisional headquarters of the revenue department, the district and session courts and the block development headquarters, attracts a large number of tribals to the town. Here one may be able to acquaint oneself with the general features of most of the varied sub-cultures of the tribals of the region, as they flock to the weekly market every Monday. Towns certainly act as an important factor in the expansion of community consciousness of the tribals.

XI

In this section we shall discuss the various communication channels that link, on the one hand, various elements within the rural social system and, the rural social system with the urban civilization, on the other. Communication media, such as roads, railways, telegraphs, etc, may be thought of as the necessary prerequisites for linking the people from the urban centres with the tribal hinterland and *vice versa*. But each of these media when extended into the tribal country is not only a channel for signs and symbols but is itself a symbol of intrusive civilization. While touring Pipal Khunt Tehsil of Banswara District in 1960, I came across a very common phenomenon. Practically every five to ten miles of the newly prepared roads were strewn with boulders. The drivers and the officials loudly condemned the mischievous tribals and also narrated how the buses were sometimes stoned for no reason by some of the Adivasis. On a more intimate contact with the Adivasis, we learnt that they considered the buses and roads as unwanted intrusion into their privacy and hence they resented them.

XII

From interviews with many old informants I learnt that about forty years ago travel between one town and another was, to say the least, cumbersome. For instance, whenever people had to go from Alirajpur to Dohad, they had to travel either on horse back or by bullock carts. Usually eight or ten bullock carts travelled in a caravan. The roads were just the badly maintained village tracks and they are completely impassable during the rainy season. It took three or four days to reach Dohad whereas these days it takes hardly four hours to complete this journey. The law and order situation, however, was much better then than in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Within their own Adivasi circles (a number of villages) the *vanya* and *Bohra* tradesmen could travel without any fear of being molested by the Bhils and other tribal Jatis.

Alirajpur is today connected by "fair weather" and "all weather" roads to all the major commercial centres in the region, such as Kukshi, Dohad, Meghnagar, Chhota Udaipur, Badwani, Kathiwara, Bhabra, Jobat and Jhabua. The extension of motor transport has taken place in the last ten years or so. Particularly since independence bus services have been expanded manifold. In 1947, there were only three or four private buses plying one trip daily to the major commercial centres, such as Dohad, Meghnagar, Chhota Udaipur and Kukshi. During the rains, on many days, the buses did not undertake any trip at all. But today, besides private buses, Gujarat and M. P. State Transport also run two trips each between Alirajpur and Dohad, Chhota Udaipur, Meghnagar and Indore *via* Dhar.

XIII

What impact has the introduction of motor transport had on the lives of the Adivasis ? Before an answer to this question can be given, it would be better to get an inkling into the traditional pattern of the tribal villager's spatial mobility. An Adivasi travels outside his village, say, to the nearest forest, for collecting wood of various types for various purposes. During the Mahuwa season (December-February) he goes to the nearest

Mahuwa groves with his family for its ripe flowers and fruits. His social obligations make him visit his affines and friends in the nearby villages. Besides, he frequents commercial villages for the purchase of various commodities and for work in the government offices located at these market centres. Very occasionally, he visits far off *Mandis* (large markets) to buy cattle and guns.

Before the bus services were introduced, the Adivasis rarely visited distant markets. Even today their commercial needs and interests are almost fully satisfied by the local commercial centres. According to many informants more Adivasis use the buses while going to or coming from the markets. Usually, the back seats in the buses are occupied almost exclusively by the Adivasis. The conductors of the buses also, generally, force the Adivasis to go over to the back seats, whenever people belonging to urban castes enter the buses. An interesting fact to be noticed is that while the Adivasi traveller on the buses provides at least a major portion of the income to the transport companies, the companies give the impression that the buses are meant, essentially, for the townsmen while the Adivasis are being merely tolerated. The buses are very often overloaded and the passengers taken beyond the legal limit are not issued tickets. In case a surprise check is suspected, the Adivasis are forced to get down and run along to reach beyond the check-point. Often the buses do not stop mid-way to pick up Adivasi travellers so that a large majority of Adivasis make their trips to the *Hats* on foot. Introduction of buses has certainly helped the tribal and the non-tribal worlds to come more closely. But even in the public transports the dominant culture of the town has forced such conventions of behaviour that tend to stress the distance between the tribal and the non-tribal worlds. Physical proximity is sought to be kept in check by emphasising structural distance. Parsons refers to this phenomenon as "boundary maintenance system".[12]

XIV

In this section a historical perspective is given to the

emergence of Alirajpur region as a well defined political community.

Before 1947, the Tehsil of Alirajpur was a princedom. It was "...one of the guaranteed chiefships under the Political Agent in Bhopawar, lying between 22° and 22°36' N and 74° S and 74°43'E in the Central India Agency".[13] The present Tehsil of Alirajpur covers more or less the same area as the erstwhile princedom. According to the local tradition, the kingdom was established by a branch of the Rathore clan which ruled over Udaipur State of Rajputana. Luard writes: "The legend runs that Anand Dev, a Rajput of the Rathore clan was one day out hunting. He pursued a hare up the hill on which Ali now stands. The hare disappeared, and evening falling, he spent the night upon the top of the hill where he dreamt that he was commanded by the goddess *Devi* to settle there. The next day thinking the spot where the hare had disappeared an auspicious site for a fort, he planted a post called the *Saskhut* (hare's post), and proceeded to build the fortress of Anandavali, later on known as Ali. Anand Dev is said to have lived in the time of the Syad Dynasty (1414–1443). The State was formerly known as Ali or Ali Mohan from the two forts of Ali and Mohan, of which the latter is now in Chhota Udaipur State. Its present name is derived from Ali and the new capital town of Rajpur".[14] The old capital of Ali is now ruined, but during *Dussehra* festivals, the Durbar of the Raja continued to shift there every year right until the merger of the State within the Indian Union.

During the first decade of the nineteenth century Alirajpur princes were under the tutelage of the Dhar Raj. Around that time a long drawn dispute between the two States arose on account of non payment of tribute by the Ali Durbar. In this conflict, the small State of Ali was able to come out victorious under the leadership of one Musafir Makrami, a Muslim general. The dispute was brought to an end by the British intervention on behalf of the Dhar Raj. As a result of the settlement, Musafir was recognised as the regent of the Ali Raja during the minority of the reigning Raja Partap Singh I. It was during Makrani's

rule that the capital of the State was shifted from Ali to Rajpur on the banks of river Sukkhar. According to local tradition, before the Rathore Rajas moved to Alirajpur the State was mainly run through the intermediary of the Mukhias of the dominant clans in every village. They were appointed headmen (Patels) over each village. It was their responsibility to collect revenues and gifts from their kinsmen and fellow villagers and present them to the Raja on certain days of the year such as *Dussehra* (September–October).

During the short period of the Makrani domination, the administration of revenue collection was further tightened. The State was divided into five *Parganas* and over each *Pargana* a *Kamasdar* was appointed as the chief administrator. To help the *Kamasdar* in collecting revenues a number of *Patwaris* were also appointed. To increase the efficiency of the administration and to advance British influence, the State was forced (by the Central India Agency) to appoint a Dewan selected by the Agency for the Durbar. No untoward incident took place in the State from 1818 till 1881. In 1881, a variety of factors led to a short rebellion (in the State). The rebellion began as a succession dispute in 1881 when the reigning Raja Rup Deo died childless, and the British Government decided to forego the escheat and a boy named Bijai Singh was selected from the Sondwa Thakur's family. This was not approved by many of the Makranis and the Thakur of Phulmal, Jit Singh, who was also a claimant for the *Gaddi*. Jit Singh joined hands with the discontented Makranis, who had lost much power and the Bhils who were in a distressed state, "...as owing to want of proper supervision, the Patwaris and district officials had extorted considerable sums from these people by raising assessment as high as they liked".[15] Together with Chhitu Bhil, Patel of Sorwa and Bhavan Tadwi of Tokria Jhiran, Jit Singh collected the discontented elements and plundered villages of Nanpur, Chhaktala and Bhalna. Even Rajpur was threatened. The leader of the Makranis was one Dad Muhammad. "He was a man of energy and strengthened the following by summoning men from Khandesh, Chhota Udaipur and Gujarat".[16] The rebellion was ultimately

crushed by the intervention of the British. Major John Biddolph who was at that time political agent of Bhopawar Agency "moved on the rebels with 36 Lancers of Central India Horse and 65 men of the Malwa Bhil Corps. A skirmish took place at the Sorwa pass and Dad Muhammad was killed and the rebellion ended. At the end of the rebellion "all were granted amnesty except Thakur Jit Singh, Chhitu and Bhawan".[17] Jit Singh fled to Gujarat and died while absconding, but Bhawan was captured and underwent imprisonment at Indore Jail.

XV

From this much abbreviated account of a crucial period in the life of the erstwhile princedom we have a glimpse of the social tensions generated on account of changes in the administrative system. With the introduction of *Kamasdars* and *Patwaris* there was a greater centralisation of authority. Thereby quite a great deal of the power of local tribal leaders was curbed. The Raja, his close kinsmen and major tribal chieftains (Patels and Tadwis) were related to each other by many personal ties. In case of a few Bhilala chiefs, the Rajas even had a kind of affinal bond. Common law unions between the Raja and Bhilala women were common. The *Dussehra* festival symbolised this personal relation between tne Raja and his liegemen. These tribal notables in turn conveyed their personal affection for their king to their tribal kinsmen and followers. *Kamasdars* and *Patwaris,* on the other hand, were recruited from the immigrant communities. Their relations with the tribal farmers were primarily of an impersonal kind. Impersonality of a bureaucratic set-up is usually compensated by its rationality. But this set-up was only partially bureaucratic since rules regarding the collection of revenue had not been rationalised, as a result of which the scope for ruthless exploitation of the tribals was very much extended. According to local tradition the years of rebellion, 1881-82, were particularly bad for the farmers and famine was rampant throughout the State. But in the commercial villages and towns most of the traders had large stocks of hoarded cereals. According to one very old informant, when the rebels reached the outskirts of Rajpur, Gang Deo and Rup Dev's mother

(the queen mother) went with a plateful of money to Chittu Patel and asked him to spare her *Ryayah* (subjects) and take away the money. Chittu refused the money and told her that he had nothing against the Raj (crown), he was not a *Lutero* (robber), he only wanted that the *vanyas* should open up their grain stores so that his hungry followers could have something to eat.

This historical incident also reveals how a coalition of disparate interests could take place and the mass discontentment directed against the centre of authority. The Makranis who led the movement were discontented because they had lost their dominant position in the power structure. The Rajput ruling group was, at the moment, weak and disunited because there was confusion regarding the propriety of adoption of Bijai Singh from the Sondwa Thakur's family. One section of the ruling lineage had not only actively joined hands with the rebels but had even been the initiator of organised rebellion. Had this rebellion occurred before the British entry into the region, the result of the rebellion might have been very different. In its true essence the rebellion was as much against the newly introduced bureaucratic system as it was against the local ruling Rajput faction. The deeper causes of mass discontent arose from the excesses of the imperfectly introduced modern administrative system into a deeply traditional society.

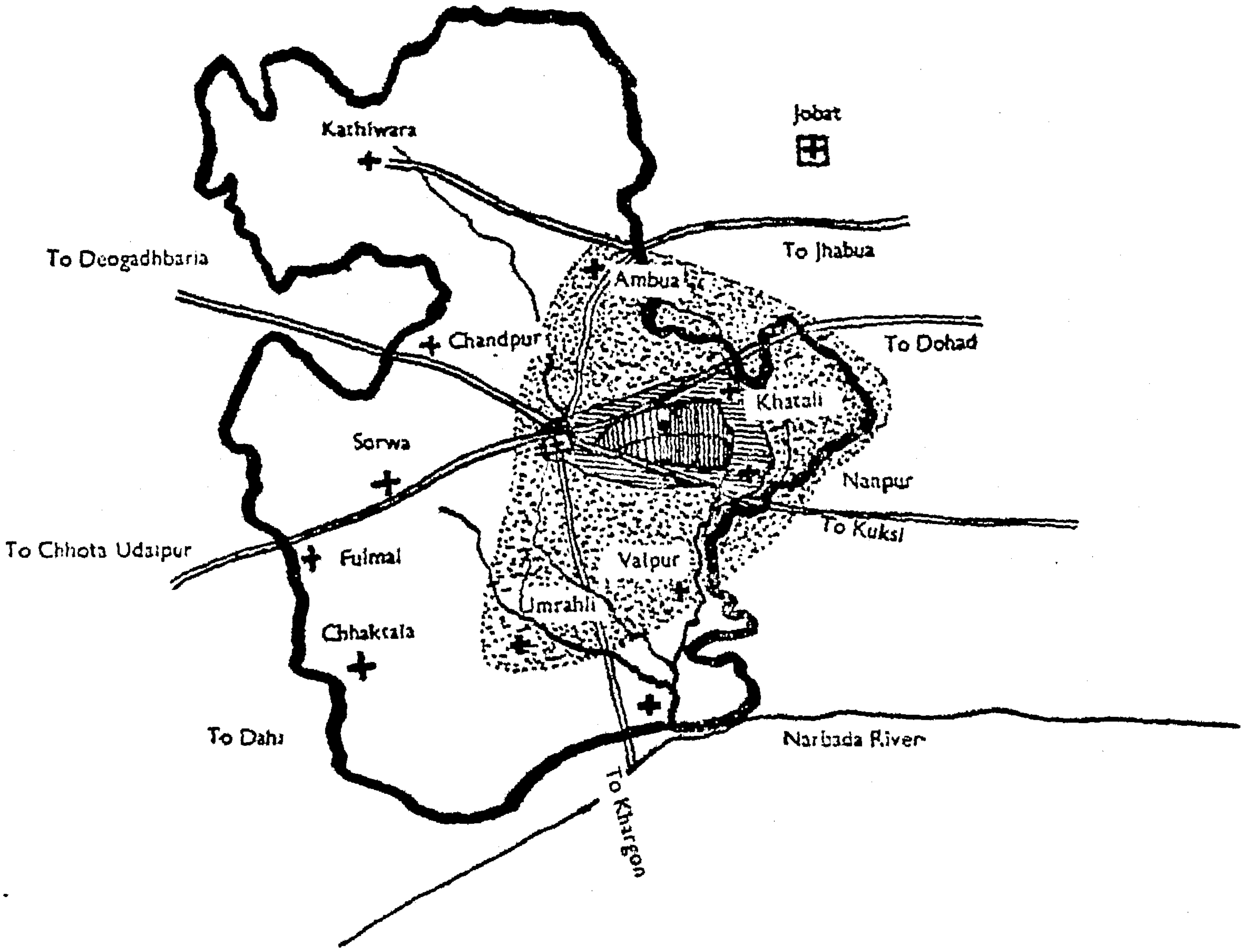
XVI

After the rebellion, the British control over the administration of the State was tightened. It was made incumbent upon the Raja to appoint his chief minister (Diwan) on the suggestion of the agent. As a result of the tighter administration, when "Bijai Singh died in 1890 without issue and the Government of India selected Pratap Singh of the Sondwa family to succeed", there was no serious opposition from rival contenders. The new ruler Pratap Singh II who was the chief "in virtue of his selection by Government and not as a consequence of any relationship natural or artificial to the late Chief" [18] was under even greater obligation to the British and was closely guided by them. According to the Gazeteer of 1908

ALIRAJPUR

NETWORKS OF RELATIONS WITH BAMANTA AS CENTRE

Map 5



LEGEND

Primary Level Community 67% Marriages in this Area		MAJOR MARKETING CENTRES	+
Quasi Primary Community Bhagoria Hats and 85% Marriages		ROADS RIVERS	
Outer Limit of all Inter Personal Relations		TEHSIL HEAD QUARTER	

"Pratap Singh, the present Chief, is the son of Thakur Bagwan Singh of Sondwa. He was born on the 12th September, 1881, and succeeded on the 10th June 1891. The Rana was educated at the Daly College at Indore. In 1901, he was entrusted with administration of the two parganas of Nanpur and Khatali as an experimental measure. In 1902, he was granted 1st class magisterial powers and full ruling powers in 1904".[19]

XVII

The reign of Pratap Singh II was an especially eventful one. It was mainly during his minority that modern Maharashtrian Brahmin influence was introduced in the State as one Shri Naik, a Chitpawan Brahmin, was selected as Diwan. Under his administrative leadership the British mode of judicial and revenue administration was introduced on a large scale. But this would have happened under any ruler. The most interesting aspect of Pratap Singh's rule is that despite constant pressures and reminders from the British authorities that his small State could not establish its own norms of justice and administration and despite the ever present existence of a British appointed Diwan, he could carry on with many of the traditional ways.

Pratap Singh was extraordinarily astute and wholeheartedly devoted to the work of ruling and managing his small State. During the forty years of his rule he made the small village of Alirajpur into a flourishing commercial and administrative town. In the words of an old knowledgeable informant: "About forty years ago the whole of the main bazar was lined with mud constructions with tiled roofs. Even the palace was a wooden and brick structure with clay tile roofings. It was not a massive structure in stone as it appears today. There was no "proper" road linking the village with any of the major towns. There were crude bullock cart trucks where vehicles could travel only with great difficulty. All houses in the town were single storeyed and the Raja was jealous of the traders who tried to build higher than his own palace. In fact, one of the traders had to get the third storey of his new stone house dismantled on

orders from the Raja. The main trading Basti was much smaller than it is today, the bazar extending only from *Ramji ka Mandir* to *Grat ka Nala* (see map 4). Baharpura consisted only of a few houses". (Taken from notes from an interview with Baba Gias Din, Age 75).

During his reign and primarily on his initiative a large number of buildings and roads were constructed of which the following buildings may be mentioned. Three palaces in or very near Alirajpur, an European guest house, the Officers' Club, the present magistrate's courts, the Diwan's and the Inspector General of Police's bungalows, a higher and two primary schools, the State hospital, and the central jail. My informants in the town told me that the Raja used to personally supervise the construction of the roads and buildings. It must be kept in mind that Alirajpur's revenues were extremely modest at the end of the nineteenth century, the total receipts for the decade 1881–90, being Rs. 74,500, but by 1940 the stated collections had gone up to Rs. 5,32,280 per annum. The revenue collection and expenditure went up by about seven times in barely half a century. We may ask as to how the Raja and his administration were able to effect this concentration of economic power and what the implications of this were for the tribals on the one hand, and for the urban dwellers, on the other. Let us compare the income and expenditure of the State in 1901-02 with 1937-38, the years at approximately two ends of the Raja's reign, to give us a broad idea of the change in the economic structure of the State. We choose the earliest years for which we have recorded data, namely, 1901–02, and 1937-38, the year just before the Second World War (Table 6).

In 1901–02, the biggest single head under which revenue collection is noted is the amorphous head, miscellaneous. One can well imagine the state of mind of the British-appointed Diwan when he might have tried to sort out the accounts of the court (Durbar)—as noted by the personal accountants of the Raja in their traditional Bahis—into some kind of a pattern current in British India. Some of the channels through which

Table 6

Receipts and Expenditure of Alirajpur State
1901–02, 1937–38

RECEIPTS			EXPENDITURE		
	1901–02 Rs.	1937–38 Rs.		1901–02 Rs.	1937–38 Rs.
Total Revenue of the State	158,000	521,701	Total Expenditure	172,000	536,811
Land revenue	38,000	241,540	Revenue collection (land)	14,300	22,481
Customs	7,000	36,083	Forest	—	11,621
Excise	16,000	37,521	Household charges: Cost of Chief's Establishment	—	36,690
Stamp	3,000	—	General Administration	40,400	23,005
Law and Justice	—	11,365	Law and Justice	—	7,387
Local Funds, *Tanka*, etc	—	9,602	Police	16,200	53,028
Tribute	—	—	Education	1,700	6,850
Other assessed taxes	5,000	—	Medical	3,800	12,647
Forest	11,000	113,564	Other heads	11,500	—
Registration Licence fee	—	564	Pension and misc. charges	2,300	5,410
Compensation for salt	—	—			

Table 6 (Contd.)

Miscellaneous	68,000	9,869	Tribute paid	9,000	8,475
Extraordinary	—	10,000	Military	—	—
Jagir income	10,000	10,000	Famine relief	40,000	—
Public Works	—	19,810	Irrigation	1,000	—
Electric Department	—	4,910	Civil public works	9,500	79,070
Excise duty on matches	—	7,422	Miscellaneous	7,000	21,006
			Extraordinary	15,000	128,970
			Jagir Expenditure	10,000	10,000
			Electric Department	—	7,777
			Customs	—	2,940
			Excise	—	3,909
			Annual contributions	—	2,896
			State charge	—	73,680
			Local funds	—	8,865

Source : Alirajpur State Administrative Reports – 1901–02 and 1937–38.

Note : There were some changes in the purchasing power of money during 1901–02, 1937–38. These, however, were not very drastic since the salary structure of government's officials remained constant during this period. Even later, during the Second World War, the price of staple commodities and wage and salary structure was kept more or less stable within the State.

more and more money was to flow were, already somewhat separated after the appointment of the *Kamasdars* and *Patwaris* in 1870s. Thus, although *Dussehra* collections (*Nazrana*) had continued as before, *Patwaris* too were collecting more regular land revenue from the tribals. Earlier it was difficult to contact the tribals since they were in the habit of practicing shifting cultivation and conveniently deserted their hamlets on learning of the arrival of a government servant *(karkumn)*. Because of the poor means of communication the wealth of the forest (wood, lac, honey, Chironji (Buchanalia Latifolia) seeds, etc,) could not be fully exploited. Moreover an Adivasi considered the forests his special preserve and often resisted excessive intrusion by the newly appointed forest officials. The Adivasi attitudes had, however, begun to change by the first decade of the twentieth century and this was brought about by a two-pronged strategy. Together with the extension of the revenue collection agency the police posts were increased on a large scale so that coercive means could be employed to pin the tribals down to specific pieces of land. Luard writes (1907): "The old custom of shifting *(Dahia)* cultivation has been stopped and indiscriminate clearing of forest for cultivation prohibited. Each cultivator is charged a commutation fee of Re. 1 per plough for all *kachha* wood, bamboo fuel and grass, but is exempted from grazing fees"[20]. Land revenue collections as a result of these measures continued to soar with every decade until by 1937-38 it accounted for nearly half the total receipts of the State (land revenue was Rs. 2,41,450 as compared to only Rs. 38,000 in 1901-02). "In the former days land revenue was collected mainly in kind. In addition to this, the State used to receive a certain quantity of ghi hemp, ropes and hens from every cultivator."[21] By the time the Gazetteer of Alirajpur State was compiled (1908), this system of paying in kind to the Durbar had already been replaced by payments in money. Yet, though land revenue was now demanded in cash by the State, after every harvest, the assessment of the tax burden for each cultivator had remained arbitrary. Survey of all the land and the land settlement were made only after the State's merger with independent India. A rough estimate of the estate of a farmer was made by the "plough". "Each plough is

taken as about 15 *bighas* (9.37 acres)."[22]

XVIII

A galloping increase in land revenue collction every year implied that increasingly large number of tribals were being made to settle permanently on land. As settled farmers, the Adivasis were being increasingly drawn into the vortex of the urban civilization. Demand for the cash payment of excise tax seems to have particularly helped the penetration of urban money lenders in the economy of the tribals. This is explained by the account of an intelligent and knowledgeable informant. According to him the Raja was active during the revenue collection season. Every year he used to pitch his camp in one or two of the major revenue paying areas. He would have with him, at these camps, the State officials and *Kamasdars* of the *Pargana*. A number of *Sahukars*, who had traditional money-lending business with the Adivasis of that *Pargana*, would also accompany him. Police and revenue officials, such as *Patwaris* and head constables, get together the Patels and Tadwis of the area for the payment of land revenue. Though many of the tribal villages paid their revenue there and then, a majority would get their revenue paid through their *Sahukar* who was, in turn, promised payment in kind by their tribal clients once the crop was fully harvested. Both the farmers as well as the government were, therefore, dependent on the *Sahukars* for collecting revenue. Since the tribals were hesitant about associating with the court officials who were rough and harassed them, the mild mannered *vanya* with an intimate knowledge of the ways of the court, and with friendly relations with the clerks, was a convenient intermediary between them and the officials. The atmosphere at these camps was, however, not altogether forbidding for the tribals since they could approach the Raja directly. There was only a limit up to which the tribals would tolerate bullying by the local officials. When put under abnormally oppressive pressure for graft by a local official the Adivasi could directly place his complaint before him. Ttibals also received sympathetic consideration for the commutation or lightening of their tax burden during years of bad harvest. The Raja was personally acquainted with a large

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number of Patels and *Tadwis* and often addressed them by name when they went to him to pay their respect and obeisance. Another "personal" feature of these camps was the "open" house for dining purposes for all those who came. A party of villagers who came to the camp would usually bring a number of goats and fowls which were sacrificed to *Sesha Khunt* (Hare Post), the sacred totem of the ruling family. The meat was presented to the Durbar and handed over to the royal kitchen. Part of this meat was served to the Adivasi diners.

Informality also appeared in the judicial and law and order departments. The Raja had the powers of a First Class Sessions Judge granted by the British. These powers he used in a largely discretionary manner. One hears of many incidents in which he gave light punishments to some criminals, got them treated well in the jail and later used them as his agents among the tribals. It is also rumoured that he tried to direct the attention of the confirmed criminals towards more opulent States in the nighbourhood of Alirajpur. Pratap Singh was in the habit of riding every morning to far off villages and forests. It was during these lone tours of the surrounding tribal country that he came to know a large number of "good" and "bad" characters of his State and also gained an intimate knowledge of its forest, agricultural and human resources. Thus, if a theft or robbery was reported in a village he was often able to give accurate guidance to his police in apprehending the suspects. Such an active interest in the administration of law and justice by the head of the State had, usually, a salutary effect on the efficiency of the officials of the State who were themselves forced to work more efficiently. It was reported that during some days of the week the Raja sat in the verandah of his palace at a conspicuous spot, from where he could observe, so that applicants who sought his attention for redressing a grivance could approach him easily. so much concentration of authority in the hands of the ruler was often resented by the Diwan of the State. But the Diwans could not contradict the ruler easily since they were usually much lesser men than the ruler. Again, the ruler maintained very cordial relations with the higher officials of the Central India

Agency and the Diwans could not depend on full support from these officials.

XIX

The Raja was also somewhat of an autocrat. It was probably not beyond him to use many "unconventional" methods to go his own. Besides many incidents of wrongful appropriation of property and personal manhandling on account of trivial "faults", etc, there were two serious collective complaints mentioned by the tribal informants against the Raja's rule. First was the complaint of extracting forced labour (*Begar*), often amounting to one month's work on public works, such as roads, buildings and palaces. During this period the conscripted labourers were issued rations and no other payment was made to them. The second complaint was regarding high rates of land taxes levied on the tribals.

Rational management of the administrative structure of the State is apparent from the perusal of the increased list of the "heads" of "receipts" and "expenditure" and their content (see Table 6). Licence fees, public works, electric department, excise duty on matches are some of the sources of income and expenditure mentioned in 1937–38 but excluded in the earlier years. Again, collections under the amorphous heading, miscellaneous, came down drastically from Rs. 68,000 in 1901–02 to barely Rs. 9,869 in 1937–38, showing that appropriate classification of income items had been made by the latter date. Same tendency to rationalise is noticeable in the statements of expenditure account. An attempt seems to have been made to keep the household expenses of the Raja separate from those of the State. Expenditure on items, such as the administration of forest, royal household, law and justice, military, customs, excise, annual contributions (State Employees Contributory Fund), State charges etc, are noted in 1937–38 but were non-existent in the earlier year (1901–02).[23] One of the important "heads" featuring in the receipts and expenditure sections for both years, 1937–38 and 1901–02, is "extraordinary". What is concealed under this vague heading? The extraordinary expenditure seems particularly

sizable in 1937-38. Enquiries from old officials of the State reveal that the extraordinary receipts were special funds and levies collected by the State from the citizens, both tribal and non tribal, to meet particularly the extraordinary expenses, such as famine relief work, payments towards special funds, such as the one collected "in response to the appeal made by Her Excellency the Marchioness of Linlithgow for the King-Emperor's Anti-Tuberculosis Fund" in 1937.[24] But the major parts of these extraordinary funds were meant to pay for such occasions as marriages or births in the Raja's household or the foreign education of the Raja's grandsons or to pay for the entertainment of visiting dignitaries, etc. The collection of these "extraordinary" funds was a regular affair and the tradition of personal administration by the Raja was quite suited to meeting these "emergency" needs.

The method of collecting funds throws some light on the role of caste as a political corporation in the traditional political idiom. The Maharaja called his important courtiers on these occasions. These courtiers came from different major and richer communities in the town. At the time when the Raja got his sister married off there were two from the Jain *Samaj* (society), three from the Maheshwari *Samaj*, and three from the Bohra *Samaj*. On other occasions a representative each of the Teli, Muslim,[25] Makrani and pinjara communities were also called to the Durbar. At these meetings the Raja was assisted by his secretary-accountant who wrote down the decisions arrived at. Lists of all the rich persons in the town were brought and each person's capacity to contribute was discussed. The procedure was that the representatives of each caste bargained with the Raja about the maximum contribution by all their caste members collectively. The Adivasi contributions were collected at the Royal camps in the country in the same manner as land revenue. Besides land revenue, the other major and constantly growing source of income was the forest. We have already mentioned that with the extension of administration by the 1870s the tribals were increasingly forced to give up *Dahia* or shifting cultivation. The tribals were thus administratively excluded from the forests. But this did not mean any serious commitment to a policy of 'forest conservation;

quite to the contrary, denudation of forests got vastly accelerated owing to the introduction of the forest contractors whose main interest was to get as much wood as possible from their contracts. It was in this manner that vast tracts of thick forests were turned into semi-barren land in course of time.

As a piece of forest land was cleared, usually some tribals came and started cultivating it. The virgin soil was particularly good for the cultivation of *Til* (sesamum) which continued to be an important oilseed crop produced by the Adivasis for commercial purposes until before the World War I.

XX

We can now see the link between the extension of the administrative frontier and the close integration of the tribal economy and polity with the region. The first stage in it was the forced settlement of the Adivasi on the cultivable and newly-cleared forest land, thus bringing about a change in the economic structure of the Adivasis. The introduction of the money economy followed soon after through the extension of *Til* (a commercial crop) cultivation and the flow of the Adivasis' surplus wealth to the town. This took place, first of all, through the heavy collection of land revenue and excise taxes and secondly through the extensive introduction of the usurious bankers.

We also saw that it was primarily through a certain traditional attachment to the ruling prince that a sense of regional identity prevailed among the tribals. When bureaucratisation of the administrative structure began in the 1870s it resulted in strong currents of tension within the folk social system, which in turn led to a disruption of the traditional structure of town-country relations. By the first decade of the twentieth century, however, the central authority had embarked on a strategy which combined the fullest utilisation of the traditional, that is, personal, intimate and autocratic techniques of feudal rule with a bureaucratic elaboration of the State's revenue organisation. Only in a small State could the ruler with exceptional ability combine the two tendencies quite effectively. Bailey (1958)[26] has also presented

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sizable in 1937–38. Enquiries from old officials of the State reveal that the extraordinary receipts were special funds and levies collected by the State from the citizens, both tribal and non tribal, to meet particularly the extraordinary expenses, such as famine relief work, payments towards special funds, such as the one collected "in response to the appeal made by Her Excellency the Marchioness of Linlithgow for the King–Emperor's Anti-Tuberculosis Fund" in 1937.[24] But the major parts of these extraordinary funds were meant to pay for such occasions as marriages or births in the Raja's household or the foreign education of the Raja's grandsons or to pay for the entertainment of visiting dignitaries, etc. The collection of these "extraordinary" funds was a regular affair and the tradition of personal administration by the Raja was quite suited to meeting these "emergency" needs.

The method of collecting funds throws some light on the role of caste as a political corporation in the traditional political idiom. The Maharaja called his important courtiers on these occasions. These courtiers came from different major and richer communities in the town. At the time when the Raja got his sister married off there were two from the Jain *Samaj* (society), three from the Maheshwari *Samaj*, and three from the Bohra *Samaj*. On other occasions a representative each of the Teli, Muslim,[25] Makrani and pinjara communities were also called to the Durbar. At these meetings the Raja was assisted by his secretary-accountant who wrote down the decisions arrived at. Lists of all the rich persons in the town were brought and each person's capacity to contribute was discussed. The procedure was that the representatives of each caste bargained with the Raja about the maximum contribution by all their caste members collectively. The Adivasi contributions were collected at the Royal camps in the country in the same manner as land revenue. Besides land revenue, the other major and constantly growing source of income was the forest. We have already mentioned that with the extension of administration by the 1870s the tribals were increasingly forced to give up *Dahia* or shifting cultivation. The tribals were thus administratively excluded from the forests. But this did not mean any serious commitment to a policy of 'forest conservation;

quite to the contrary, denudation of forests got vastly accelerated owing to the introduction of the forest contractors whose main interest was to get as much wood as possible from their contracts. It was in this manner that vast tracts of thick forests were turned into semi-barren land in course of time.

As a piece of forest land was cleared, usually some tribals came and started cultivating it. The virgin soil was particularly good for the cultivation of *Til* (sesamum) which continued to be an important oilseed crop produced by the Adivasis for commercial purposes until before the World War I.

XX

We can now see the link between the extension of the administrative frontier and the close integration of the tribal economy and polity with the region. The first stage in it was the forced settlement of the Adivasi on the cultivable and newly-cleared forest land, thus bringing about a change in the economic structure of the Adivasis. The introduction of the money economy followed soon after through the extension of *Til* (a commercial crop) cultivation and the flow of the Adivasis' surplus wealth to the town. This took place, first of all, through the heavy collection of land revenue and excise taxes and secondly through the extensive introduction of the usurious bankers.

We also saw that it was primarily through a certain traditional attachment to the ruling prince that a sense of regional identity prevailed among the tribals. When bureaucratisation of the administrative structure began in the 1870s it resulted in strong currents of tension within the folk social system, which in turn led to a disruption of the traditional structure of town-country relations. By the first decade of the twentieth century, however, the central authority had embarked on a strategy which combined the fullest utilisation of the traditional, that is, personal, intimate and autocratic techniques of feudal rule with a bureaucratic elaboration of the State's revenue organisation. Only in a small State could the ruler with exceptional ability combine the two tendencies quite effectively. Bailey (1958)[26] has also presented

a case study of the extension of administrative and economic frontiers into the tribal hinterland. In his study, the caste system and the administrative system make concerted inroads into the tribal society. The process is basically two pronged, pushing the tribals deeper into more hostile natural environs as appropriation of their lands by warrior castes develops apace and their sanskritisation. Thus, both economically as well as culturally the tribals experience a retreat against the onslaught by the technologically and organisationally superior caste-society.[37]

XXI

Besides a feeling of regional identity on the political plane which essentially grew around the person of the Rajput ruler and his family, a broader sense of unity of the Adivasi community too has come to prevail. This sense of unity is indicated by the fact that the Adivasis have an image of themselves which is contrasted with that of the non-Adivasi. The Adivasis are *Manus* (man) whereas the townsmen are *Naroo Karoo* (useless beings). This sense of unity of the tribal communities of the region is as yet only an emotional response against the "Hindu" commercial and, generally, city element. It is true that with better transport facilities, kinship contacts are getting more extensive which in its turn, is also helping a wider dispersal of clans. Both these tendencies (that is, spread of affinal links and dispersal of clans) is bringing about a certain fusion of tribal people across sub-culture areas. This tendency, however, is not so far developed as to blur the distinctions between the sub-cultures. Probably the most potent factor in favour of the development of regional community consciousness is the politicisation of the Adivasis following upon the extension of democracy (that is, adult franchise and *Panchayati Raj*) after the merger of the State with independent India. The Socialist party (Lohia group) has emerged in this region as the strongest and most active political force in furthering the "sense of tribal unity" insofar as in its early campaigns it rallied the anti-vanya and anti-administration sentiment of the tribals and gave it a militant direction. In this process the Adivasis forged a certain sense of unity on a wider ideological basis than the traditional one.

XXII

One of the important factors for a sense of regional community among the Adivasis is the widespread institutions of regional markets. The Adivasi goes practically every week to a market in one of the nearby commercial villages where he meets and recognises people of his own kind from many parts of the region. A sign of the effecitve social existence of the regional community is the manner in which a traditional organisation of the markets in the region has come to be co-ordinated. People of Bamanta, for example, go to three marketing centres located in three different directions. Towards the west, at a distance of about seven miles is the major marketing centre—Alirajpur town. In the south-eastern direction, about eleven miles away, in Nanpur, a commercial village and in the north-eastern direction, at a distance of about 12 miles is Khatali. Each market has an Adivasi market day. The chart below gives the division of their week into days;

Monday	*Rajpurga'n dihade*	Market at Rajpur
Tuesday	*Kukshi'n dihade*	Kukshi
Wednesday	*Khatali'n dihade*	Khatali
Thursday	*Chichli'n dihade*	Chichli
Friday	*Kadwali'n dihade*	Kadwal
Saturday	*Nanpuri'n dihade*	Nanpur
Sunday	*Ajanda'n dihade* or *Ditwal*	Ajanda

The day is known by the event which makes it significant (namely the market).[28] If the markets are important centres of commercial exchange they are probably even more important to the Adivasis as occasions for meeting friends and relatives from near and far who use the same markets. Links cutting across local ties are confined within the tribal boundaries because of the strength

of endogamy as the primary boundary maintaining institution. Thus, the vague image, in the mind of the Adivasi, of an extra-local community is primarily one of an extending chain of affinal relatives. We have already mentioned about the *Bhagoria Hats* (elopers' markets). People living within the circle of the market come to these *Hats* in their droves and often young men and girls get introduced to each other as a preliminary to possible marital unions or elopements. These *Hats* are also an indicator as well as a reaffirmation of the Adivasi sense of community.

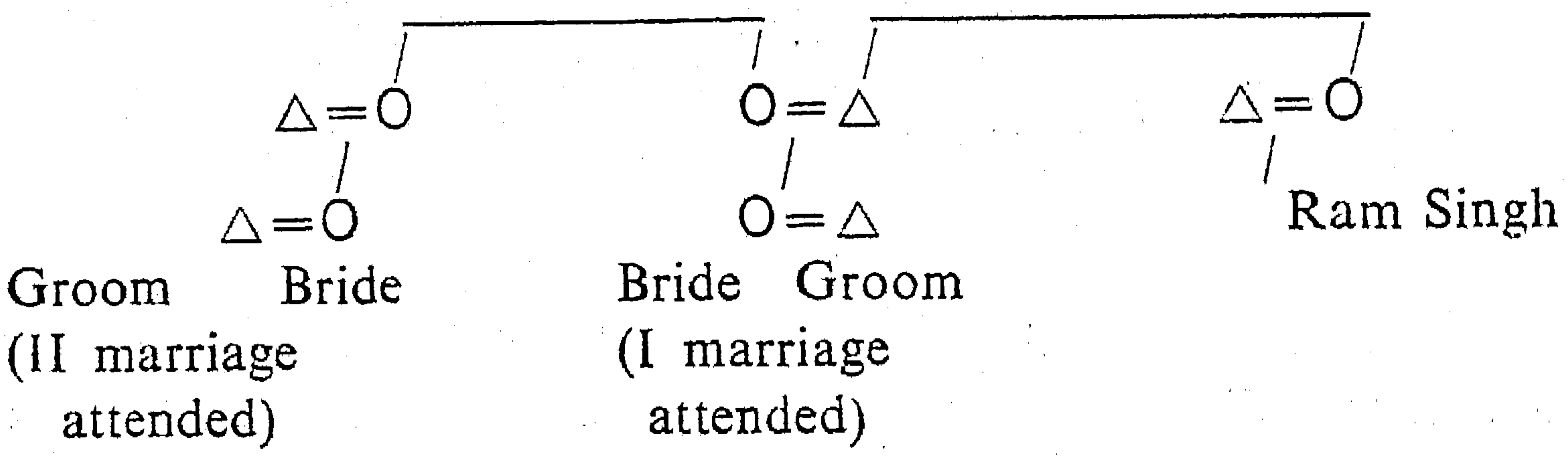
Friendly links may be renewed between relatives from different villages and may spread from there to village friends of the relatives, and thus the region may become internally significant not merely as a region of consanguinous relations but also one of friends; a sense of spatial social community is thus realised in a more concrete fashion. A diffused feeling of oneness among the tribals is also furthered by the sheer congregation of a large number of them on particular days at the market centres and on the roads leading to the markets. To illustrate the manner in which this sense of belonging is demonstrated in behaviour, we quote below from our diary, a visit to the market:

"Jwan Singh came in the morning and asked if I would be going to the *Hat* in Alirajpur. I said "yes". I gave him a *biri* to smoke while he waited for me till I get dressed. Jwan Singh is the eldest son of Mohan Singh who was the second son of the Bhaidya clan *Mukhi* (head). He is an intelligent and energetic young man of nearly 23. His newly acquired wife will stay with her parents for a few days after which Jwan Singh will go to bring her. Her father's village "Gawan" is only about two miles away from Alirajpur town. Jwan Singh, his wife, Jwan Singh's deceased brother's son Buwan, aged 12, and myself started off together for Alirajpur on foot. Jwan Singh made me lead the way while we were walking on country paths. He held a rather large handled sickle in his hand as he said: "one should have something for protection". As we were walking we met Dashrath, Badva (medicine man) of the village with a pot of palm sap *(Tari)* on his head... When we reached the road Jwan Singh

came up by my side. Soon quite a few of Jwan Singh's *Pichan Ke*, (acquaintances from the neighbouring villages) joined us and there was a quite jolly crowd by the time we were near Alirajpur. I counted seven people with whom Jwan Singh exchanged greetings in the formal way. With the people who were merely *Pichan Ke* no greetings were exchanged. A smile and a few words indicating casual acquaintance were all that were needed to throw us together as a group of wayfarers going to town. Jwan Singh said that two of the persons whom he greeted were his close affinal relations, all the rest were relations through fellow villagers".

In one of the marriages at Rajawat, a village in the neighbourhood of Bamanta, I met an young man (Ram Singh) whose genealogical link with the bride was mother's brother's wife's sister's daughter. Ram Singh had come to a neighbouring

Figure 1



village from a village in Nimar district to attend the marriage of his mother's brother's daughter. When he learnt that his mother's brother was going a few days later to attend his wife's sister's daughter's marriage, he too accompanied him to Rajawat. Ram Singh was unmarried. Marriages are occasions when eligible young men of other clans can know eligible "marriage-girls from 'permissible' clans.

Though the Adivasi finds the town and the commerciai village an indispensable channel to widen his own social horizons, it is surprising that the townsmen and the villagers remain emotionally and diacritically apart from each other. There is

probably some latent desire on the part of the Adivasi to be included within the in-group of the townsmen, but, except in those few cases where he lives within the towns and has taken over to the urban mode of livelihood, this is not expressed by an aggressive imitation of urban caste ways. On the whole, the urban culture is experienced as one of the broad and culturally dense niche of the total socio-cultural environment. When confronted with it, the tribals' first attempt is to use and internalise those elements of this environmental sphere that can advance his own socio-cultural dialogue with other members of his tribal society. We may explain this by referring to some facts. Adivasis do not try to identify themselves with the Hindu religious temples or shrines even though Hindu religious-cultural traits are incorporated by them within their own religious idiom. Even the material traits adopted by the Adivasis are converted to their own typical styles. Again the Adivasis do not try to include themselves in the Hindu hierarchy, though caste idea is very much a part of their total world view. On the whole, with a few exceptions, the Adivasis try to learn from the Caste-Hindus, but do not try to join them. (See specially Chapter IX).

XXIII

Before this chapter is closed it would be appropriate to sketch out the broad contours of the social and political system as it emerged in the princedom of Alirajpur at the end of the Second World War and before independence. The administrative hierarchy was headed by the Raja. The accompanying diagram gives the main roles in this hierarchy. It is apparent that the hierarchy is very similar to the one that was prevalent in British Indian administration, except that the Raja was the *de jure* as well as *de facto* head of the administration. The diagram shows that the Raja headed all areas of administration. He was not only the highest judical authority in the princedom, but was also the *de jure* legislative authority. Criminal and civil laws of British India were also applicable to the princedom. But this was legitemised, "under the legislative authority of his highness". Raja's Durbar (Court) was authorised to act as Class I magistrate for civil cases and as Class I

Chart 1

Levels of Hierarchy in the Princedom

Raja

Judiciary	Revenue Administration	Law and Order and General Administration				
Civil and Criminal Courts	**Revenue : (land); Excise taxes**					
Diwan	Diwan	Diwan				
District Magistrate and Sessions Judge, of the Appelate Court						
Munsif Magistrate Class II (State Level)	Munsif Registration (State Level)	Public Works (Supdt)	Forest Dept. (F.O.)	Medical and Vital Stat. (M.O.)	Police (Supdt. of Police)	Educa-tion (E.O.)
		Over-seer	Rangers	Hospital Staff	Thana (Inspector)	
Kamasdars Magistrate Class III (Parganah Level)	Kamasdars (Parganah Level)		Guards		Head Constable	
					Constables	
	Patwari (Village Circle)					
	Patel (Village Level)					

Sessions Judge for criminal cases. For all practical purposes no judicial cases went out of the State to the Regent's Court at Dhar, through the Regent and through him, the government at Delhi, was the highest judicial authority.

Diwans were appointed by the Regent with the consent of the Raja. He was the chief assistant of the ruler and assisted him in evey branch of government. He was the Appelate Court Class II for civil and Sessions Judge for criminal cases; head of the revenue collection machinery, and in–charge of the day–to–day functioning of the administration. In actual practice he had to work in collaboration with the officers incharge of various departments. He also had to act in such a way as not to annoy the Raja. The chance of the Raja clashing with the Diwan was always there, since in theory the Raja was supposed to rule through his Diwan; but the exercise of power in the local community was the real "power"; the ruler had no real authority to legislate, and the satisfaction of ruling came mainly from directing day–to–day processes of government. Most often the ruler worked directly with the offiicers in charge of the departments. He took many of the decisions affecting these departments, on the spur of the moment, without any attempt at preserving the hierarchy of the bureaucratic structure. It is said about the Raja that he took personal interest in the buildings being put up by the government and often ordered the overseer in-charge to change the plans. Probably the only person in the official hierarchy whom he could not order about was the medical officer. Every other department was open to his active interference. Despite Raja's apparent power over the administration, the bureaucracy must have functioned, more often in accordance with its own normal procedures. For example, the Raja did not pass judgments in all the cases brought to the courts. In 1936–37, appeals were preferred for ten criminal cases in the courts out of which only three went in the Durbar and the rest in the court of the Diwan. Sheer volume of work, going through the regular offices of the bureaucracy itself made it a power in its own right.

As can be seen from the parallel revenue and judicial

structure, there was an identification of the two functions in the same set of persons. After independence this was partially remedied when judiciary emerged as an independent branch. At this stage I need not describe the functions of the revenue collecting and other departmental authorities. Their specific functions are apparent from the nomenclature. I would like to concentrate my attention on their role in producing a sense of regional community within the princedom. The representatives of this bureaucracy at the village level were the *Patwaris*, the constables, the Patels and the village guards *(Kotwals)*. The *Patwaris* assessed the revenue paying capacity of the Adivasi farmers within their village circles. They therefore came into close contact with the villagers in general, and the Patels and Kotwals, in particular. It is true that they were often looked upon as immediate exploiters of the tribals. But their relation was not always conceived as an unhappy one. There were instances when *Patwaris* could be of help to the farmers in milder assessment of land revenues during scarcity. They also got them cheap loans from the treasury on occasion *(Taqavi)*. Some *Patwaris* became so much a part of the social set-up of the Adivasis that they were called upon to act as mediators *(Banjgadie)* in inter-clan disputes. The constables, on the whole had, and still have, a rather unpleasant image. As instruments of coercive authority they had the power of using force to protect the innocent; but it could be used to shield the guilty as well if they were in a better position to pay the price in terms of bribes. Adivasis, however, could have a direct approach to the Raja. Sometimes an influential trader could act as the "advocate" of the wronged Adivasi. The local officials, therefore, could not be too oppressive in their demands on the tribal. Behind the formal, bureaucratic channels, which communicated authority in one direction (from above to below) and resources in the other (from below to above), there were also the informal channels. These channels made it possible for the adjustment of individual interests with the rigid demands of the bureaucratic machine. This informal adjustment was not too difficult in those days because role specialisation within the bureaucracy had not advanced too far. There was a great deal of informal

interaction between the bureaucracy and the townsmen, as well as between the townsmen and the Adivasis. Again, the Raja too was not so inaccessible to the townsmen and the Adivasi elite.

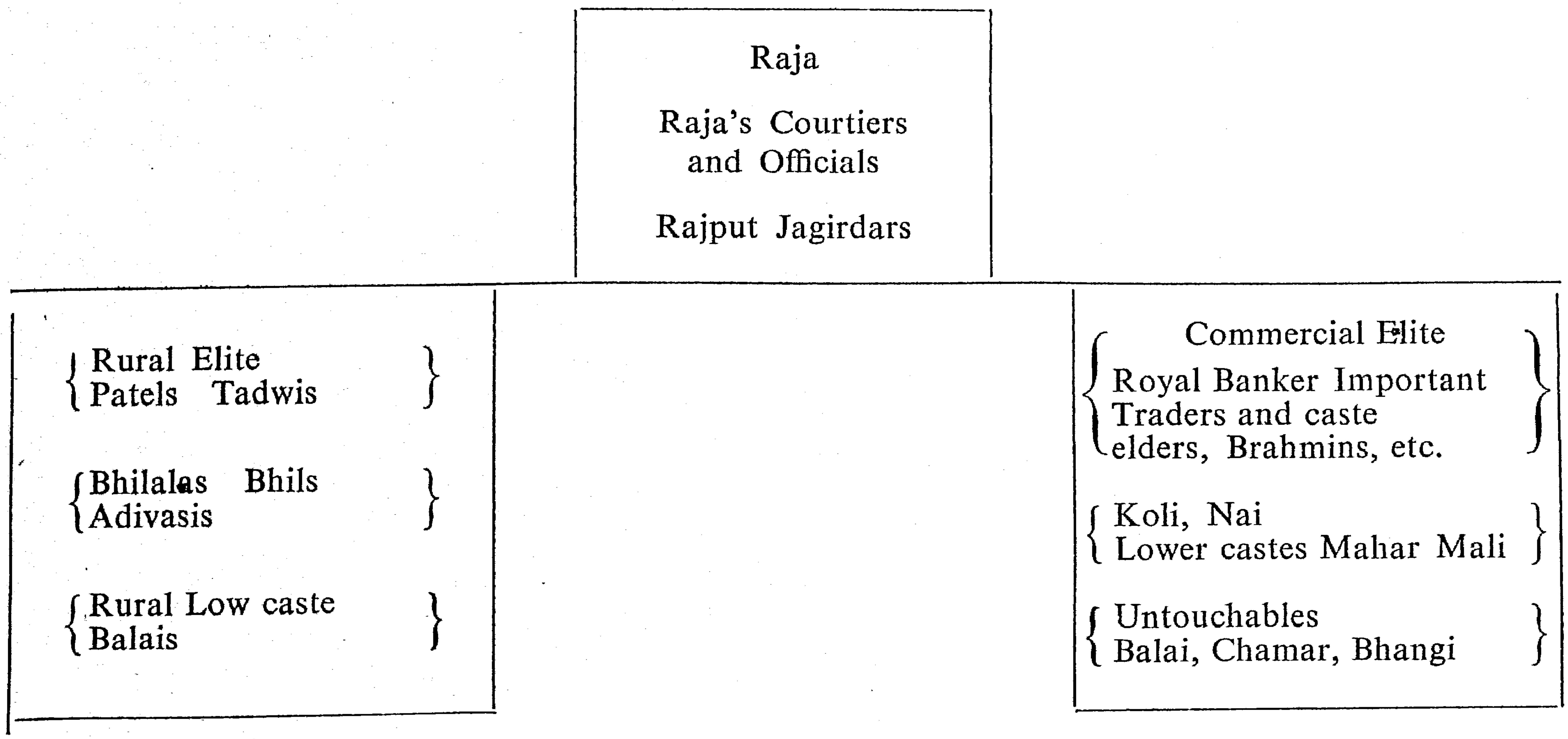
The description of the structure of relation between the Adivasis and the bureaucratic system brings to the fore an underlying "social hierarchy" besides the bureaucratic hierarchy. It is not possible to give any dates of origin of this hierarchy; it had evolved in the process of the establishment of the Rajput domination and the growth of urban centres around the centralised Rajput administration. The accompanying diagram schematically presents this social "hierarchy", headed again by the person of the Raja. (*Chart 2.*)

Each rectangle represents a heuristically separable sphere of prestige. The Raja's court together with the Raja formed one such sphere which stood in contraposition to the rest of the social categories. To some extent "in the presence of the sphere of power" the other categories were equated in terms of their inferiority. This meant that although the commercial elite were closer, structurally, to the Raja, occasionally the lower castes could defy their authority provided they were protected by the Raja. The Adivasi commoner could approach the Raja for protection against his own Jagirdar relatives. The diagram also represents separation of the rural and urban spheres; but with the Raja and the Jagirdars, as the power elite, forming the "head" of both the spheres. The rural and urban are again shown to be united independently of the power hierarchy. Although basically the spheres are economically interdependent the relations in a largely traditional society can rarely be purely economic; a certain degree of ritual and social inter-twining is unavoidable. Some description of the traditional social hierarchy has already been made and more will be made later. Here I would like to point out some of the salient characteristics of the relationship between different spheres of social life that the roles mentioned in this "hierarchy" represent.

It must be made clear at the outset that the roles men-

Chart 2

Sociogram of the Social Hierarchy in Alirajpur



tioned above did not fall into a structure of authority as neatly as they did in the bureaucratic system. Except for the Raja and his immediate entourage, consisting of military and civilian personnel the placement of these roles and the categories that they represented were prestige rather than authority-based. Although in actual situations prestige could be converted into authority, but this was not inevitable. Raja was directly concerned, along with his administrative machinery, with the village level leaders, such as Jagirdars, Patels and Tadwis. Within the town he dealt with the caste elders and rich citizens. Hierarchy is not a very good term to describe relations between categories, which in many important respects acted as autonomous segments of society. Tribal communities were not dependent on each other in the same way as castes are in the traditional Hindu caste system. There was no functional or occupational specialisation between the two main tribal communities— Bhils and Bhilalas. The Rajput elite had a symbolic relation with the townsmen on the one hand, and the Adivasi, on the other. It is true that the townsmen and the Adivasis had a very specialised type of inter-dependence upon each other, but this was not accompanied by political inter-dependence. The Rajput elite was in some respects both urban and rural. The seat of the Raja is in the commercial centre at Alirajpur and the estates of the Rajput kinsmen in the rural areas. The internal social structure of the town was composed of autonomous *jati* communities with their own traditionally determined internal forms of organisation.

The grammers of the relationships between the *jatis*, both tribal and non-tribal, between each *jati* and the Rajput authority; between the townsmen and the Adivasis and finally between the Adivasis and the Rajput authority, had all their distinctive features. At the festival of *Dussehra* the townsmen feasted separately from the Adivasis. They did not sacrifice goats like them. The Adivasis had their feasts in their separate village encampments. Hindu townsmen feasted together. The royal entourage, however, included elders from all the above classes of people. The relationship between townsmen and Adivasis was largely economic and followed, mainly, the principles of bargain and

contract. The Adivasis and the Rajputs were related with each other in terms of tradition, ritual and power. The principles guiding these relations were reverence, coercion, and mediation (by Rajputs, between competing autonomous segments of the Adivasis).

The Raja, the Patels, the Jagirdars and the elders of the towns' castes were the leadership roles in the three major categories (Rajput elite, the townsmen, and the Adivasis). In our scheme of analysis the Jagirdars and Patels played a crucial role as bridge elements. It is through them that the tribals received urban culture elements. Again they acted as political links between rulers at Alirajpur and the tribal social system in the countryside, thus integrating the tribal country with the wider polity. Because of the importance of the two roles it would be better to give greater details of their place in the rural-urban system. The Rajput Jagirdars live in bigger brick constructions. Some of them like the Thakar of Sondwa have stone bunglows. These are modelled after the palace of the Raja, but on a much smaller scale. Some other Jagirdars have large brick houses with heavy, carved, wooden gates. These houses are built in such a fashion that women could have a separate portion of the house from men. For example, in one of the villages the Jagirdar has a two-storeyed house with a main entrance leading to the courtyard and a side entrance leading to a large sitting roo m The sitting room is used exclusively by men when they are gossiping with other men. The younger generation of Rajputs have chairs and tables in their rooms and the walls are decorated with hunting trophies and photographs of the family members as well as those of the Royal personages.

Rajputs employ Brahmins for their marriages and have their Gaud Brahmins to keep genealogies of their families. They also keep some clean caste individuals as personal attendants and servants. They may have, for example, a clerk to keep accounts, a cook and probably a number of *Malis* to look after the orchards. Rajput Jagirdars of Alirajpur, like the Royal family of Alirajpur, usually look towards Rajput princedoms and estates.

of Gujarat for marital alliances. When a bride was sent to her in-laws she brought with her a number of "female attendants" *(Paswan)* and a number of male servants. These people kept her company, and together with themselves brought "packages" of outside culture. Undwa is a large village which was a Rajput Jagir until the land-reforms. The Thakar of Undwa–Rai Singh–was married to a Jagirdar family at Chhota Udaipur. At his marriage the Thakaraen (Thakar's wife) brought a number of Balai servants. One of these Balais is said to have introduced green and yellow dyes to colour the thread commonly used by the weavers of Chhota Udaipur to make designs on the loin cloth. Many material culture traits such as dress, jewellery, species of vegetables common in Gujarat and even varieties of mangoes have come to this area probably through this route. Sondwa Thakar's orchard has the Gujarati *Alfonzo* (?) which they say were brought from Gujarat by one of the Thakuraens.

Rajputs usually send their children to school and occasionally even to colleges. Most of the Jagirdars have at least one house in Alirajpur as well. Much of their time was, and is therefore, spent in Alirajpur. This link with the town meant that they imbibed a degree of commercial rationality, which was apparent from the fact that their farms were run partly on commercial lines. The orchards and the fields which the Rajputs did not rent out to the tenants, often became experimental plots where commercial crops were grown. I was told that Raja Pratap Singh himself tried to grow cotton on his fields and encouraged others to grow. At one time he dreamt of establishing a textile industry in his princedom. Cotton growing was, however, successful only in isolated patches and the production was insufficient to support the formation of cotton-based industry. Thus the Rajput Jagirdars and the bigger Bhilala Patels were the first to make the experiments of growing cotton on their farms.

From among the Adivasis bigger Bhilala patels are closest to the Rajput Jagirdars in terms of culture. Majority of the Patels were headmen of the Rayatwari villages. Each patel was allowed a large area of land as a privilege that went with his

office. Besides he also had some land as his ancestral property. He was also allowed to keep between five to ten per cent of the land revenue collected as his commission. The bigger Patels were, therefore, quite well-off and could maintain a standard of living somewhat similar to that of the Rajput Jagirdars. Many of the Bhilala headmen's houses were brick constructions with at least one of the doors made of heavy wood and carved with designs. These houses were, by and large, made in the prevalent tribal style, and used the skills available, mainly, within the tribal community. For example, the bricks and tiles were baked within the village by the family of the Patel. However, the carved wooden doors used by the Patels were made by the carpenters from the town. These symbolised the middle culture of the Bhilala Patels. Some of the Bhilala Patels arranged marriages of their sons and daughters with the Patel families of equal status. To get "right" matches they went long distances. For example, the son-in-law of the Patel of Sej Gaon belongs to Godhra in Gujarat. He is educated and has a prosperous business and a farm, a rather unusual combination of occupations for a Bhilal a

In Alirajpur it is becoming a common sight to see a Bhilala Patel wearing muslin Dhoti, and shirt in town style, and carrying a gun on the shoulder. They are thus getting distinctly different in dress to the common tribals. At the same time they are not confused with the people of the town, who are rarely seen wearing turbans, and carrying arms. In another context I have quoted a number of short cases of the leading Patel families of the Tehsil. It is apparent from these that the Patels are, on the whole, interested in the education of their children. Often they are themselves educated. Many of the Patels who are illiterate, like the Patel of Bamanta, are intersted in getting their sons and grandsons educated. Many Bhilala Patels—Patels of Bamnata and Mayala—have donated land for the building of village schools and health centres.

Just as contact with the Rajputs and the towns have affected the culture of the Adivasi leadership, the Patels have, in turn, been instrumental in spreading some of the urban traits

among the tribals. Mal Sing Mukhi of Bhaidya clan explained the reason for the name Khapri *Phalya*, one of the hamlets of Bamanta. He said: "During my father's days we used to live in Khapri *Phalya*. The *Phalya* was then not known by this name. In those days our houses had grass roofs. One day my father brougt a Kumhar from Alirajpur and with his help he baked tiles and changed over to the tiled roof. My father was quick to learn the technique of baking simple tiles and through him others in the hamlet also learnt and changed over to tiled roofs for their houses. Since that hamlet was the first to have a tiled roof– "Khapri"– the hamlet came to be called by that name". In this story we have the illustration of a change introduced through the aspiration of a Patel for a better house and the help of a skilled craftsman. This is at the same time an illustration of a bridge-action between two roles in the rural and urban systems.

Patels may act as model leaders but usually change in the culture of a tribal takes place when he feel a shift in his structural position *vis-a-vis* the urban society. Patels are, to some extent, members of the urban-based administrative system. When an individual Adivasi feels that his new position in society has brought him closer to the urban-based institutions he begins to use urban dress, and other marks of urbanisation to symbolise this shift. When I first went to Bamanta in 1960 only the Patel had a muslin Dhoti, an English style shirt and a jacket. He had purchased these at various times from the bazar at Alirajpur; and he wore them whenever he had to deal with "higher" officials. In 1963, I noticed that Prem Singh, the "member" (Bamanta's representative in Kharkuan Panchayat) was also donning a muslin Dhoti and *Achkan* an (Indian coat)'type coat at one of the weddings.

Notes and References:

1. Dussehra is usually the time for dramatising the traditional principles of social structure of a regional community. The parochial versions of the festival appear to be strongly coloured by the specific features of the region's traditional social structure Cf. Surajit Sinha, "Social Organisation of Dussehra Festival in Jagdalpur", Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1961.

2. *Alirajpur State Administrative Report*, 1936–37 to 1939–40, Alirajpur, 1943, p. 15.

3. Based on information collected from the office of the collector, Jhabua in 1961.

4. R. Saxena, *Tribal Economy in Central India*, Calcutta, 1964, p. 14.

5. G. Jagatpathi, *Census of India 1961*, Vol. VIII, Madhya Pradesh, Part IIA, p. 304.

6. Ashish Bose writing in *Social and Economic History Review* says: "A town is determined on the basis of a number of empirical tests a) a density of not less than 1000 persons per square mile; b) a population of 5000; c) three-fourths of the population should be outside of agriculture; d) the place should have, according to the Superintendent of the State, few urban characteristics, the definition of which, however, leaves room for vagueness." "Town in Indian Census", *Social and Economic History Review*, Vol. I (3) 1964, Delhi, pp. 91–94, Cf. *Census of India, Paper No. 1, 1962, Final Population Totals*, P xxxvii.

7. Based on: *Census of India 1961*. Vol. VIII, Madhya Pradesh, Part II A, General Tables, p. 304.

8. 1961 Census does not give a break up of the population in terms of actual caste or tribe. These figures are derived from the *Census of India State Series 1931*, Vol. VIII. Alirajpur State compiled by C.V. Venkatachar, Allahabad, 1932.

9. Grierson writes: "In Barwani Tehsil, which is largely a Bhili tract, the Bhili dialect is Bhilali and Rathwai Bhilali. They are essentially identical with the dialect spoken in Alirajpur. The Bhili dialect spoken in Alirajpur and Bardwani state of Bhopawar Agency is a mixed form of speech, and in many characteristic features agrees with Rajasthani, or more specially

with Nimadi. It is also sometimes called Bhilali or in Barwani Rathwi Bhilali." G. A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India* Vol. IX, Part III, p. 51.

10. Three-fourths of the community is concentrated in Nimar. Cf, *Census of India 1931*, Holkar State, Part I, p. 253

11. The debt slaves in Rajasthan are called Sagris. A Sagri may be asked to live and work for his creditor at the creditor's fields. The debt is almost impossible to pay off since interest on the capital as well as new debts accumulate much faster than the Adivasi's wages while he works on the creditor's fields. The creditor provides for the Sagri's bare sustenance, i. e. food for the Sagri's family and two pairs of clothes for each member of the family during the year. The debt is passed on from father to son. Alirajpur is fortunately free of this system.

12. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, Tavistock, London, 1952, p. 543.

13. C. E. Luard, *Aliraj State Gazetteer*, Bombay, 1908, p. 1.

14. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-5.

20. Luard, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

21. 22. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

23. Alirajpur State Administrative Reports 1937-38 and 1901-02.

24. *Ibid* (1937-38), p. 5.

25. "Muslims" nomenclature is used in Alirajpur to denote Suni Muslims. Bohras are Shias and are not included in this *Jati*. Rangrez and Pinjara Muslim castes are usually excluded from this category-though they too are Suni. These two castes tend to marry only within themselves and other Muslims consider them lower.

26. F. G. Bailey, *Caste and the Economic Frontier*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 7; and *Tribe Caste and Nation*, Oxforp University Press, 1960.

27. N. K. Bose, "Tribal Economy", in *The Adivasis*, Government of India Publications Division, 1965, pp. 118.

28. For insightful comments on the "social-time" see E. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Collier Books edition, New York, 1961 pp. 480-90. Its most apt use is found in E.E. Evans Pritchards The Nuer (1940).

Introduction

Most of the illustrative data in Part II come from Bamanta.[1] It is a small village situated about seven and a half miles from the Tehsil headquarters of Alirajpur. The village is accessible first by a metalled road for about six miles. One has to travel about one mile through fields and cross Sukhar river before reaching this village. A house to house survey of the village was conducted in 1961. It was found that the village had 50 families and a population of 295 persons. *Jati* composition of the village was found to be: Bhilalas 47 families; Balais 3 families; and Non-Adivasi 1 family (the school teacher)

It was mentioned in the introduction to this thesis that the central objective of this study was to understand the manner in which the rural system in Alirajput Tehsil was integrated in the regional set-up, and the role of the urban elements in this process.[2] In view of this objective it is necessary for us to study the lowest level of the rural system, namely, the primary community and locate the bridge elements within it. We must also locate networks of political and economic relations projecting out of the primary community and intruding into the primary community to understand the manner in which it is linked with the broader social system. Because of *Jati* endogamy, kinship networks do not penetrate substantially into the urban system, but rather extend over a socio-cultural region. The urban system, not only provides the marketing facilities but also helps in making more frequent the interaction between affines and agnates. The political links between the rural and urban systems are represented by some of the traditional village institutions, such as the Patel and the Kotwal. The member of the Panchayat is a a recently introduced office. *Patwari* used to be the one official intruding into the village life somewhat frequently. Besides him the V.L.W. and the teacher of the village school are today the other officials linking the tribal with the wider social system. An objective of this part of the thesis is to bring out the degree of autonomy and dependence of the local level of community with the wider level and its urban foci.

CHAPTER IV

Territorial Axis

I

Each house or set of houses owned by the same person, stands in its own compound *(Angan)* which is surrounded by a wooden fence *(Bagad)*. On one side of the courtyard is a cattle shed which is also a tiled roof structure but has a kind of attic store. The ceilings and walls of cattle shed are made of stout logs of wood. Somewhere in the courtyard there is a wooden platform *(Moli)* on which large and small black pots are kept for storing water. The house consists of a single large hall *(Ghar)* and a running varandha *(postal)*. Next to the cattle shed is the chicken coop and the goat shed.

II

As has been mentioned already, the Bhil and Bhilala houses rarely form into a compact locality.[3] Usually a Bhilala family builds its house on top of a mound close by a stream. A convenient plot of land close to the house is converted into a maize field by constant application of organic manure and rudimentary bunding. The top of the mound is chosen not for the sake of the maize fields (in fact land in the lower grounds is usually more fertile and better suited for cultivation) but for security reasons. If the reasons of security dictate the choice of higher ground for residential building, the same reason also dictates that the precious maize be grown close by. This, in turn, limits the usefulness of constructing new houses close to the ones already there, since the new houses would have to be built on the precious maize land.

There is only a limited potentiality for the fissioning families to build houses next to each other; if they did that would be building on the first quality land which they can scarcely afford to do.

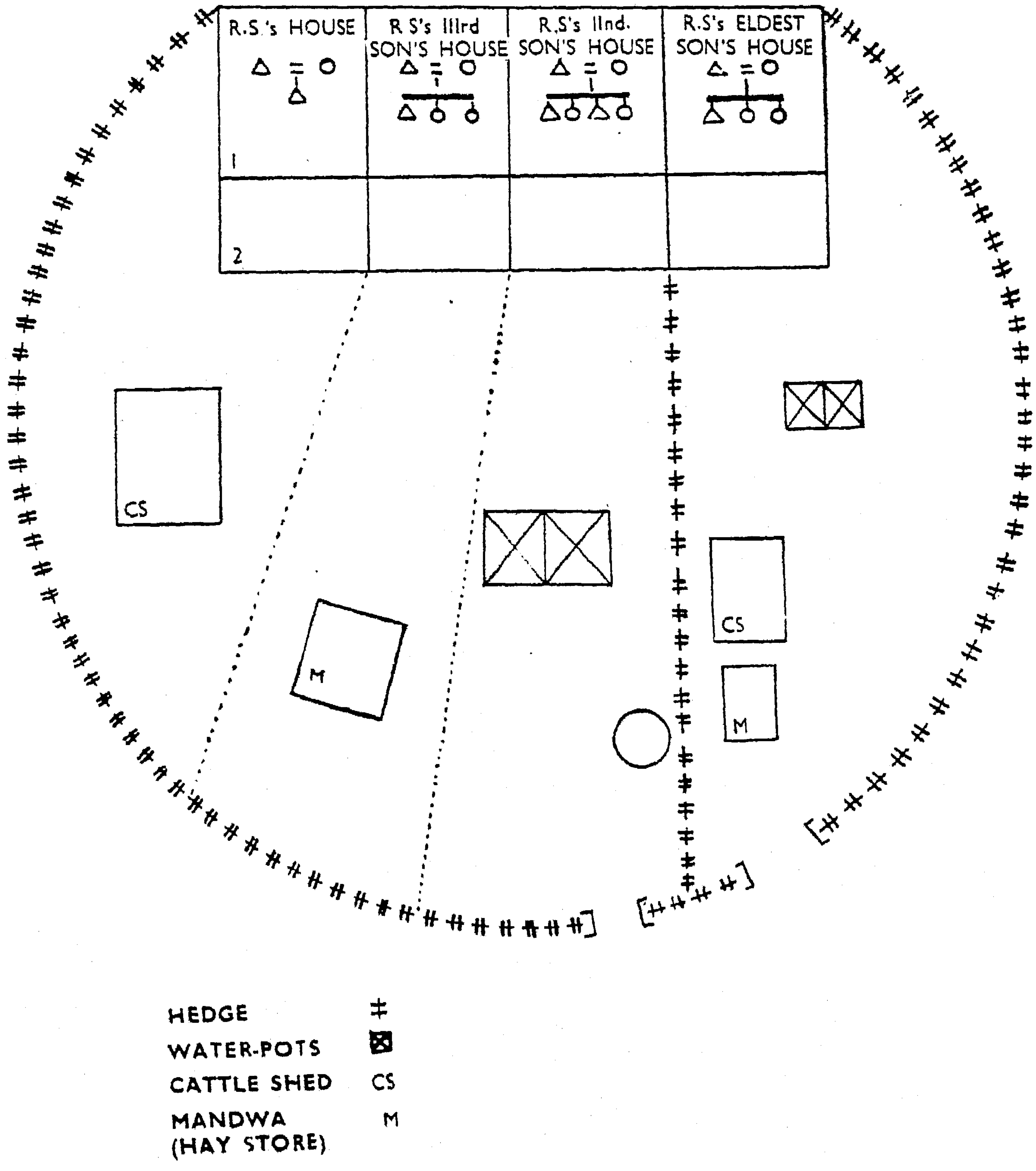
On the other hand, if people settled on the second quality plots, these would be turned into first quality fields in due cours of time. (See Map 6) Some local administrators described the tribals as naturally individualistic and lacking in the desire to live close to each other in healthy fellow feeling. As we shall see, this is an entirely wrong picture of the Adivasis who do not lack fellow feelings for their Adivasi neighbours and kinsmen. If the Adivasis do live apart they do so primarily out of security and economic considerations though other considerations can not be ignored.

When a new house is established, it starts, usualy, with only two adult members, a man and his wife. At this phase of their developmental cycle they are actually short of labour supply. The conversion of an arid, sandy and stony land into better quality maize land requires hard labour and any adult who is willing to come and live with the family is welcomed. As the children of the family grow and begin to contribute their labour to the family farm, the wealth of the family rises and the founders—the father and mother—are able to find more time for rest and play with the grandchildren. The sons do not always leave the house of their parents as soon as they get merried but keep staying with their parents and unmarried younger brothers and sisters. But the social norms recognise the desire of married son and his wife for privacy and autonomy. In this respect, the Adivasis make a realistic appraisal of the increasing tensions in the houses where there are more than one married woman. Let us take the example of Ram Singh, one of the hamlet leader of Giri Phalya:

He is living with two of his married sons in the same house, but each of them has a separate compartment so that they can lead within the larger household a somewhat autonomous life of their own with their families of procreations. The accompanying map gives us a rough idea of the manner in which the "compartments" are built (see Drawing 1). In the drawing, I have also indicated imaginary lines that divide up the household into four parts to suggest a possible break-up into four separate households afler the death of Ram Singh.

DRAWING - I

RAM SINGH'S JOINT AND EXTENDED FAMILIES



This kind of division of the household, however, is not always possible, or desired, even after the property-division has taken place. But occasionally one of the sons may take up a corner house and build a partition of wooden hedge which would symbolise a much sharper division in the family than if they merely divided the property and expenses but continued to live within the same compound. We must caution aginst taking the pattern of housing suggested by the figure as universallly prevalent. There are certainly other ways of compartmentalising the house. For example, in the case of a poorer farmer who has not been able to afford a separate house for his married son immediately after his marriage, at least the sleeping quarters are kept separate for each married son and his family. The son and his wife with children may sleep in the inner hall, while the father and his other male companions in one corner and the famales in the other corner of the verandah. Such an arrangement is always considered one of temporary accommodation. Sometimes the separate compartments may not be built in a single row but arranged on two or three sides of the courtyard as illustrated by the houses of the extended family of the Patel of Rajawat (see Drawing 2). Occasionally, the nuclear units may live together in the same courtyard but maintain separate kitchens. Rumania Balai's household consists of two such kitchen units, one of Kemta, Rumania's sister's son and his own. Another more frequent form of division consists of maintaining separate households but cultivating jointly. In Bamanta, four such households were found. In one case the cosharers were a brother and sister and in the other case brothers.

III

What all these "cases" illustrate is that the family of orientation is accorded great emphasis in the Adivasi society.[4] In a vast majority of cases the Adivasi domestic group does not extend beyond a two generation-depth (i.e. parents and their offspring) and only at certain stages of the developmental cycle does it extend beyond three genaration-depth. We have seen that the primary reasons for shorter generation depth of the families is the economy and protection of the *Vadi* (house-field).

At the same time we must not forget that joint family living is practiced only when it "brings home" certain political and economic advantages. It is obvious that large joint families do not bring many economic advantages in the given topographical conditions and level of technology of this region. The management and development of "house fields" is done most effectively by a small well-knit nuclear family rather than a large joint family. Again, when we consider the security aspect, we realise that the most important asset of the Bhilala is the maize field and not what he has accumulated over his lifetime (in any case there is precious little of that due to the subsistence economy). He must therefore live close to his field, rather than huddledup in nucleated localities, to better protect his standing crop. It is true that conditions are gradually changing and as the volume of property increases the need for larger families and closer placed residences.[5]

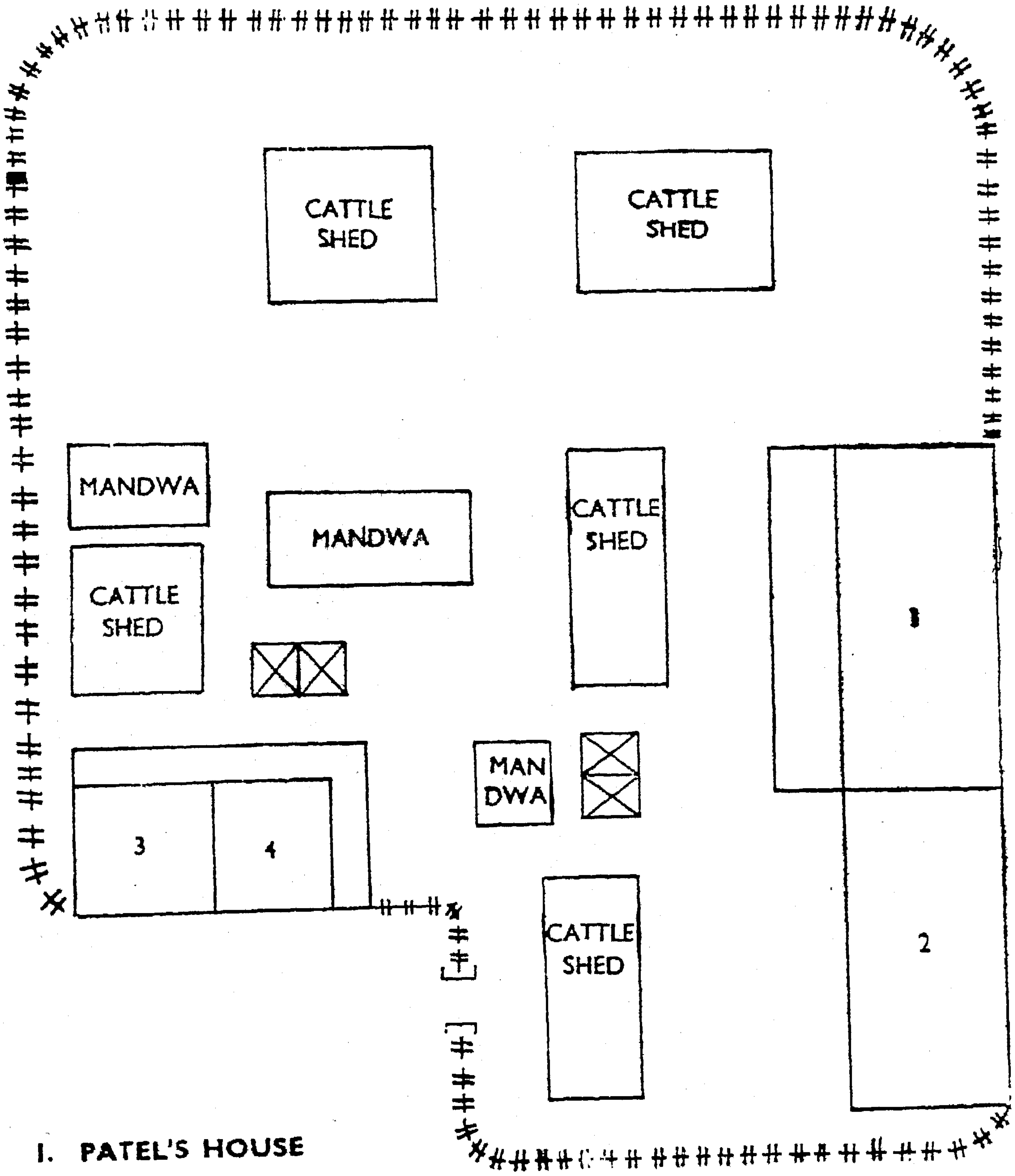
No doubt there are other than economic advantages of large joint families. Political inflcence derived from larger, cohesive families is one. However, this advantage may be offset by intense factionalism perennial among the agnatically related large lineages in those peasant cultures in India where, joint family ideology predominates. Bhilalas seem to have opted for a way of life which, if it reduces the fighting power of an individual family, it also reduces the chances of conflict within the wider agnatic group.

IV

Spatially and socially the four hamlets of Bamanta village can be grouped into two pairs of hamlets. The two close placed hamlets, Pujara *Phalya* and Patel *Phalya* are near the southern border of the village. The other two hamlets, Giri *Phalya* and Khapri *Phalya*, are located in its northern part. The distance between the two pairs of *Phalyas* or hamlets is nearly a mile. A hillock or raised ground, named "Rola Bedi", after the name of a village deity, intervenes between the cultivated fields of the two sets of hamlets. The neighbouring hamlets are separated from each other by small seasonal streams. The Khapri stream

DRAWING-2

RAJAWAT PATEL'S EXTENDED FAMILY



1. PATEL'S HOUSE
2. PATEL'S YOUNGER BROTHER'S HOUSE
3. HIS FATHER'S BROTHER'S SON'S HOUSE
4. HIS FATHER'S BROTHER'S HOUSE

X WATER PITCHER'S

FENCE

divides Giri *Phalya* from Khapri *Phalya*, while the Giri stream forms the boundary line between the Patel and Pujara hamlets. Table 7 gives the hamlet-wise break up of the total population of the village.

Of the four hamlets one is composed entirely of the Patel's extended family. There are only four households in this hamlet and all their members are direct descendants of Mal Singh, the

Table 7

Bamanta Hamlets and their Population

Hamlet	Population			% of population in each hamlet (approximately)
	Males	Females	Total	
1. Giri *Phalya*	45	51	96	32.6
2. Khapri *Phalya*	53	39	92	31.2
3. Pujara *Phalya*	36	42	78	26.4
4. Patel *Phalya*	15	14	29	9.8
Total	149	146	295	100.0

over eighty years old and 'retired' Patel. The Pujara hamlet which adjoins the Patel hamlet is much larger with fourteen households of the Pujara (Priest) extended familly. Three of the Balai family, four households of the Baharmia Bhaidya clan and two households of immigrant families of Vaskalya and Masania clans. The Vaskalya family is attached to one of the pujara families as uxorilocal affines and the Masania family is similarly attached to one of the Baharmia Bhaidya families. The Baharmia Bhaidyas, the Masania and the Balai families were originally resident in Khati *Phalya*, but that hamlet was abandoned by its residents since it was attacked by thieves so many times that the residents of Khati hamlet became convinced of its inauspiciousness. In both Giri and Khapri hamlets most of the houses are of the Bhaidya clan. Although not all of them can show genealogical connection with each other, they do recognise

that they are related to each other as *Kaka-Baba'n, that is,* agnatically.

As we can see, each hamlet is inhabited by one or more Bhaidya-extended families together with their immigrant affinal relatives. Familial and locality ties therefore largely overlap and produce a strong and close knit primary community in a hamlet. The familial bond is, however, observable as stronger than that of mere nelghbourhood. This may not be easily discovered, since in ordinary daily intercourse, the mere neighbour and the neighbour who is also a relative may not be easily marked out, unless the observer has genealogical charts of persons with him. But the difference between a mere neighbour and a relative appears in times of conflict. As the quotation from our diary illustrates:

The *Sawin Bharna* ceremony (bride payment) in Nawal's house was tense. Patel, Gulab Singh who was supposed to be presiding over the ceremony was utterly drunk and unable to attend it. Jhapadya, his younger brother assumed the role of master of ceremony. After *Dona Badllano* ceremony *Gur* (mollases) was brought by Nawal to be distributed. The *Gur* was not sufficient nor was it properly granulated for distribution. Jhapadya accused Nawal of being a miser. At which Nawal spoke up to say that Jhapadya was a fool, and he did not understand any *Reet* (custom) of their family. At this, Jhapadya slapped Nawal and Nawal would have hit back but for the intervention of other persons. The quarrel between Jhapadya and Nawal at once led to tension between the lineage of the Patel and the Baharmia Bhaidyas. This was apparent from the way in which two very fast friends Harpal, the younger brother of Nawal and Remta, Jhapadya's nephew and Gulab Singh Patel's son were issuing contradictory orders to the Kotwal drummers, Remta asking them to stop and Harpal telling them to play on. Although the dance with swords and clubs was building up aggressive emotions, the Baharmia Bhaidyas in the audience went on urging the Kotwals to go ahead and keep playing the drums.

V

Desrite the ritual distance between Balai and other Adivasi *Jatis*, they may develop a degree of intimacy with their Bhilala neighbours, Let me give an example of how this intimacy between neighbours, irrespective of 'caste' is shown.

It is toddy season (the months of May-June) and in the evenings people get together in the home of a neighbour and the host very often serves the guests with palm sap. This evening, I was at Dudwa's house. A few other of his neighbours too had gathered. There was Jivan Singh and Dasrath and Ram Singh. As we sat talking of the murder of a Giri *Phalya* man by his wife, Rumania entered the *Bagad* (courtyard), said 'Ram Ram' and sat down on the ground. As a voluble talker he immediately became the central figure in the circle. Before drinking, everyone poured the necessary oblations to his ancestors and said 'Ram Ram'. The distance between Rumania and the other guests sitting on the floor was also greater than that between other Bhilala guests. Although Balais are thought to be ritually polluting, except this symbolic commensal distance no other difference was made between Rumania and others. Once a symbolic expression of lower ritual status has been made, Rumania was accorded all the consideration due to him as a person, neighbour and friend. He was given the same quantity of sap as others and was addressed in the same friendly informal manner and participated in the jokes of the gathering as an equal.

VI

The geographical separation of the hamlets (or sets of hamlets) is reflected in social terms also. Most, though not all, of the informal 'give and take' of minor items, such as buttermilk, salt, fire and utensils, takes place within the hamlet. Informal visitings and gossips are also mainly confined to the same or at the most nearby hamlets. A quotation from my field diary reads: Patel's brother Jhapadya often comes and both of them have toddy (*Tari*) Jivan Singh also comes to the Patel's house to meet his friends—Remta and Phata. Before Holi and sometimes in summer they get together and play

on a drum and dance around it. When some outsider visits—like when the Patel's sister was here - they sit around the fire. But generally it is the family members or people from the same hamlet who get together. Residents of other hamlets do not come to Patel or Pujara hamlets too often.

People living as neighbours do need each other and these are the occasions which establish a certain bond beteen them. There is a saying in their language, *Jo hasse cho vasse jo lade cho dhasse* (one who laughs stays long and one who quarrels has to scamper away). Examples of co-operaton or sociability are most frequently found between the members of the neighbouring hamlets. For example, when a theft took place in Bamanta Patel's house only his immediate extended family and people from the neighbouring Pujara hamlet came to investigate the theft.

Patel *Phalya* is the first halting point for the government officials on a tour of the village. It is also near the *kachha* track passing through the eastern neighbouring village Mayala and is therefore more easily approachable to visitors than other hamlets. Frequent visitors to the Patel's house are the leaders of the other three hamlets and the village *Kotwal* (Guard). Besides these individuals we were able to record very few individual visitors (to this hamlet) hailing from the distant Giri and Khapri hamlets. The village school is located in the Patel *Phalya.* Sometimes pupils come from distant hamlets to attend it but the usual attendance is only from Pujara and Patel hamlets. The *Gram Sevika* (Lady V.L.W.) and the midwife's headquarters were also situated in this locality. Occasionally, people from Pujara *Phalya* came to consult the midwife or take medicine from the *Gram Sevika.* The two female workers were withdrawn in 1962.

The Pujara *Phalya* receives local visitors somewhat more frequently than the Patel *Phalya.* In this hamlet live two of the most important traditional "professionals", namely, the native doctor-cum-magician (*Badwa*) and the priest (Pujara) of the dominant clan of the Bhilala population. The hamlet is named after the priest of this clan. The Kotwal or the village-guard

also resides here. The total population of the hamlet has been augmented by immigrants from the now deserted Khati *Phalya*. Since the Patel and Pujara *Phalya* are neighbouring localities, the two together could be termed as the growing nucleus of village life.

VII

The concept of village land is not the same as land owned by the villagers. The boundaries of the villages were drawn as some time in the past. Today the villagers often own land across the revenue boundary of the village into neighbouring villages. Let us take a case: "Chain Singh of Giri hamlet is Bhima's father's sister's son's son. His father came to Bamanta in 1901 He goes to Kodli to cultivate his land". Another case is of Mal Singh who has some land in Mayala village; he does not cultivate this land, but does use it to graze his cattle. Belongingness to the village is reflected in the village institutions—religious and secular. The transformation of certain clan institutions into village institutions came about through the separation of land from the local clan. The clan "Pujara" was the priest for all the gods within the clan boundaries. When some of the land in the village went over to the non-members of the dominant clans he still remained the prime agent through whom they (the deities) could be contacted.[6] Members of other clans, therefore, also recognised him as their priest but only for the purpose of propitiating deities which were connected with the land. Malya Bap Deo, Kumpalaya Deo, Bhabesta Kahadya and Khera Bai are some of the deities propitiated by all the clans and castes of the village together; but the family and the clan goddess (*Ghirsari*) is only propitiated by the particular priest of the clan, or, in his absence, by their married son. The feeling of belonging is expressed not only through obeisance paid to the village gods but also through co-operation and reciprocity between people living within the village. The village as a social unit manifests itself through traditional and emergent leadership institutions. Let us have a look at them.

VIII

In terms of authority the Patel is the central figure in the village community. He is a quasi-government official appointed for life or as long as he is capable of bearing the responsibilities of office. Usually he is chosen from amongst the traditionally most influential families. The Patel of Bamanta is the eldest son of the Bhaidya clan *Mukhi* (chief).[7] His main function is to act as an agent for the administration in the village. He helps the *Patwari* to collect land revenue. With the help of the village guard (Kotwal) he informs the police of any criminal incidents in the village. It is his duty to help the police in the investigation of criminal or any other illegal activities in which the villagers may indulge. When the officials visit the village you will find him dressed in his best—with a *dhoti* and a heavy turban, attending to them. For his services the Patel receives 6.25% of the land revenue collected from the village. Originally the Government had allotted to him, in lieu of his services, approximately 20 acres of land which was exempt from tax; but after the allocation to the Patel of the share in revenue, he is liable to the payment of land revenue on the land allotted to him as Patel. The block people usually expect the Patels to be more 'forward' and open to influence. Let us take the example of Gulab Singh Patel of Bamanta:

It is easier for the extension workers to get hold of the Patel for extension activities and his conversion to the extension methods of farming has certainly played an important part in making this village a relatively progressive one in a generally very backward region. Because of his frequent contacts with the officials and his ability to influence them, he is often contacted by the villagers and in turn has to contact them quite frequently; as a result, his influence over them is considerable. As a member of a traditionally respected family of the clan's chief *(Mukhī)* and also as an official of the Government, it is within his power to help or harm others. His knowledge of the out-group as also of the in-group certainly makes him well suited for the role of a "birdge" between the administration and the village's social system.

The Patels very often act through influential heads of the extended families and leading persons of various hamlets. These hamlet leaders are not the elected representatives of the hamlet, neither are they necessarily the oldest persons. They come to be recognised as leaders because of their personal qualities. Usually a hamlet leader is middle aged rather than young or old. He is always the head of a family even though there are others in the family older than him. All the leading persons of the four hamlets of Bamanta are better than average farmers and, on the whole, part of the economic elite as well. But what distinguishes the hamlet leader most from the common head of the household is his attitude towards the outsider. His intelligence and personal charm help him in his role of a negotiator in family disputes. The hamlet leaders often meet each other even though their hamlets may have some grudge against one of the leading men of the other hamlet. Though neither named, nor forming a legally constituted body, the hamlet leaders are the *Panch* or councillors of the village community whose decisions are invariably accepted by the villagers. The Patel consults and includes them in most of the activities in which the villagers as a whole are involved. These activities are as varied as depositing the land revenue at the Tehsil treasury and discussing with the block officers subsidies for building "model huts" or sitting in judgment as a *Panch* to chastise villagers for sexual or other misdemeanours.

IX

All the village guards in Alirajpur Tehsil belong to the Balai *jati.* The Balais were an untouchable caste in Malva and Rajasthan region. They, together with Chamars, immigrated to this area.[6] The Kotwal functions as the representative of the police administration in the region. He is expected to assist the Patel in maintaining law and order in the village, inform the villagers of any visitors from the town. Collect *Rasad* (necessary food items) for these visitors from the villages and inform the police station in the vicinity of any untoward incident in the village. He supplies the *Patwari* with information about births and deaths in the village. For these official duties the Kotwal gets about eight acres of land on which no revenue charges are asked. The

village guard is also a village servant. He spreads news of marriage, death or any other important religious ceremony to be held in the village. He plays drums at all these functions and has been accorded a ritual place in the marriage ceremonies of the Bhilalas. For his services to the village community he receives two and one half *chawki* (ten seers) of grain at the time of any marriage and four *chawki* (sixteen seers) of grain at the time of the harvest from each household. We have already mentioned the Pujara in connection with his religious role in the village and the clan. Here we may add that by virtue of the respect he commands, the Pujara may also be a leader of his hamlet.

The Badwas' influence is not confined to his kin group or the village community, but spreads to other villages in proportion to the effectiveness of his techniques. Even within the traditional system the medicineman's is a "universalistic" function. The Badwa helps the Adivasi villagers in all sorts of difficulties, curing human and cattle ailments and crop diseases, all being within his range of specialisation. The instruments of his powers are a number of secret *Mantras* and a few other material artifacts—fire in an earthen bowl, a bamboo pipe, a branch of neem tree, a broom made of palm leaves and a few herbs. The Adivasis' faith in the Badwa is so great that they do not consult the doctors or *vaids* (experts in Indian system of medicines) until and unless the Badwa declares his inability to cure the patients. If a *Badwa* fails in his claims, they do not blame him but rather their own bad luck. When a *Badwa* comes across a "complicated" case he consults other *Badwas* who get together and use their powers collectively in order to deal with the situation. The *Badwa's* explanation of sickness is that the gods and spirits of the dead may sometimes act against the living if they consciously or inadvertently go against their wishes. The spirits are somewhat worse than the "gods" because they may have avaricious desires about which the living may have no idea. The *Badwa* is an adept at divining the nature of the spirits afflicting the living body as also the rightful sphere of a god's power, he can, therefore, suggest remedies for placating a deity. These may be sacri-

fices of hens, goats, etc, besides his own magical formulae and application of herbs from the forest. A realisation that modern medicine can be an effective remedy for illness has not reduced the Badwa's influence mainly because his efforts are also very often successful, partly because of their psychological effect on the patients and partly due to the efficaciousness of his herbal applications.[9]

Notes and References:

1. G. S. Aurora, *Socio-economic Monograph of a Tribal Village* (mimeographed), Agro-economic Research Centre,Gwalior 1963.

2. A large number of studies have dealt with the problem of rural-urban relations. The most influencial of these have been by Redfield (1954) *op. cit.* and Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and Its Transformations*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1953. See also a collection of papers in P. K. Hatt and H. J. Reiss (Eds.) *Cities and Societies*, Free Press, Glencoe (III), 1957.

3. Dispersed residential locality has been observed by the students of tribal cultures all over the Western India tribal belt. Cf. Y. V. S. Nath, *The Bhils of Rettanmal*, Baroda, 1961; T. B. Naik, *The Bhils: A Study*, Delhi, 1956; C. M. Carstairs, "Bhil Villages of Western Udaipur" in *India's Villages*, edited by M. N. Srinivas, Asia, Bombay, 1955, pp. 68–76; P. G. Shah, *Tribal Life In Guiarat*, Bharatya Vidya Bhawan, July 1964.

4. In the Adivasi society emphasis on the individual and the family of orientation stands in contrast to the caste-Hindu family norms. Dumont has the caste Hindu society in mind when he claims that the traditional societies are necessarily corporate in nature as opposed to the modern societies. Bhilalas are one traditional society which is individualistic. Ruth Bendict mentions Dobu as another such society. Cf. J. Boel, "Book Review : *Homo Hierarchicus, essai sule systeme des castes*, by Louis Dumont, Paris, 1966" *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. XVII (1) 3/1968, Delhi; R. Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, Chapter on Dobu, Mentor Paper Back, New York, 1951 (edition), pp. 120–59.

5. In Tamia Block, which is a Gond area I was struck by relatively bigger hamlets, but also dispersed house-holds. Each house had a small field attrched to it in such a way that the fields were mostly at the back of the houses and the houses opened on to a lane. People told that a few decades ago the localities were less dense and fields usually surrounded the houses.

6. It is interesting to note that in many of the Gond villages in Mandla the medicine men and priests of the earth deities are Baigas, who, it is believed, were the original inhabitants of the region. See *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol XVII, Oxford, 1908, p. 163.

7. Village headmen are still called *Mukhis* in Udaipur district. The authority of lhe *Mukhi* is not necessarily coterminus with that of the village, but rather the local clan and its hamlet; it is, therefore, possible to find more than one headmen in a single village. See Carstairs, *op. cit.*, pp. 69–70.

8. Cf. Max Weber's reflections on the role of the magician and the Shaman in creating points of loyalty cutting across kin – groups and tribes in "The Social Psychology of World Religions" in Gerth and Mills (Eds) *From Max Weber*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1964, P. 272.

9. Cf. Evans-Peitchard, *Witchcraft*, *Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, Oxford, 1937. See also C. Levi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and His Magic" in *Structural Anthropology*, Basic Books, New York and London, 1963, PP. 163–185. In this essay Levi-Strauss demonstrates that the sorcerer helps the cure by creating a situation in which the audience, the patient and the sorcerer all go through the experience, of *abreaction* or reliving of their original stress experiences.

CHAPTER V

Kinship Axis

In common parlance "family" refers to a social unit consisting of a male and a female united to each other on a more or less enduring basis for the purpose of economic co-operation, mutual emotional support, reproduction of species and socialisation ard care of the progeny. A comparative study by modern anthropologists of a large number of cultures suggests that it is impossible to isolate the minimnm functions of the "family" in all cultures.[1] Neither do we find mother and father to be the consistent nucleus of all family situations. Well-known examples of deviations from the above mentioned definition of the family are found in India itself. There is the case of the Nayar traditional family in which a child was raised and given property rights in the house of his mother and was "fathered" by his mother's brother rather than his genitor. The genitor's only major function was to act as the seed-giver to his wife. He came to his own children as a kindly guest rather than as an ever present protector.[2] The case of the Kulin Brahmin's numerous wives in Bengal is even more striking since among them, it sometimes happened that the Kulin husband did not even see the offspring of many of his scores of wives spread all over Bengal's countryside.

The most striking fact about the functions of the family is that practically all its functions may be appropriated by any other institution of the society. Instead of conceiving the "elementary family" as consisting of biologically related individuals it should rather be thought of an ideal typical model of a configuration of basic relations, namely, conjugal (husband-wife), parental (mother-child, father-child), sibling (brother-sister, brother-brother, etc).[3] If we go along with Levi-Strauss we

would also include in these avuncular relation, which structurally links the set of relations with the wider society.[4]

The family when thought of as configuration of relationships is yet concerned with tangible "functions" of a basic character. But if many of the functions which the family seems to look after are universally present it does not mean that the forms of family organisation would necessarilly be similar throughout the human race. The term household is often used in two different but related senses.[5] On the one hand it is used as a synonym of "family"; on the other, it is used to refer to a social unit occupying a given house. In most circumstances the two different notions refer to the same "operating unit". Although it is possible to conceptually separate the two concepts, for our purposes the concepts may be considered synonymous.

II

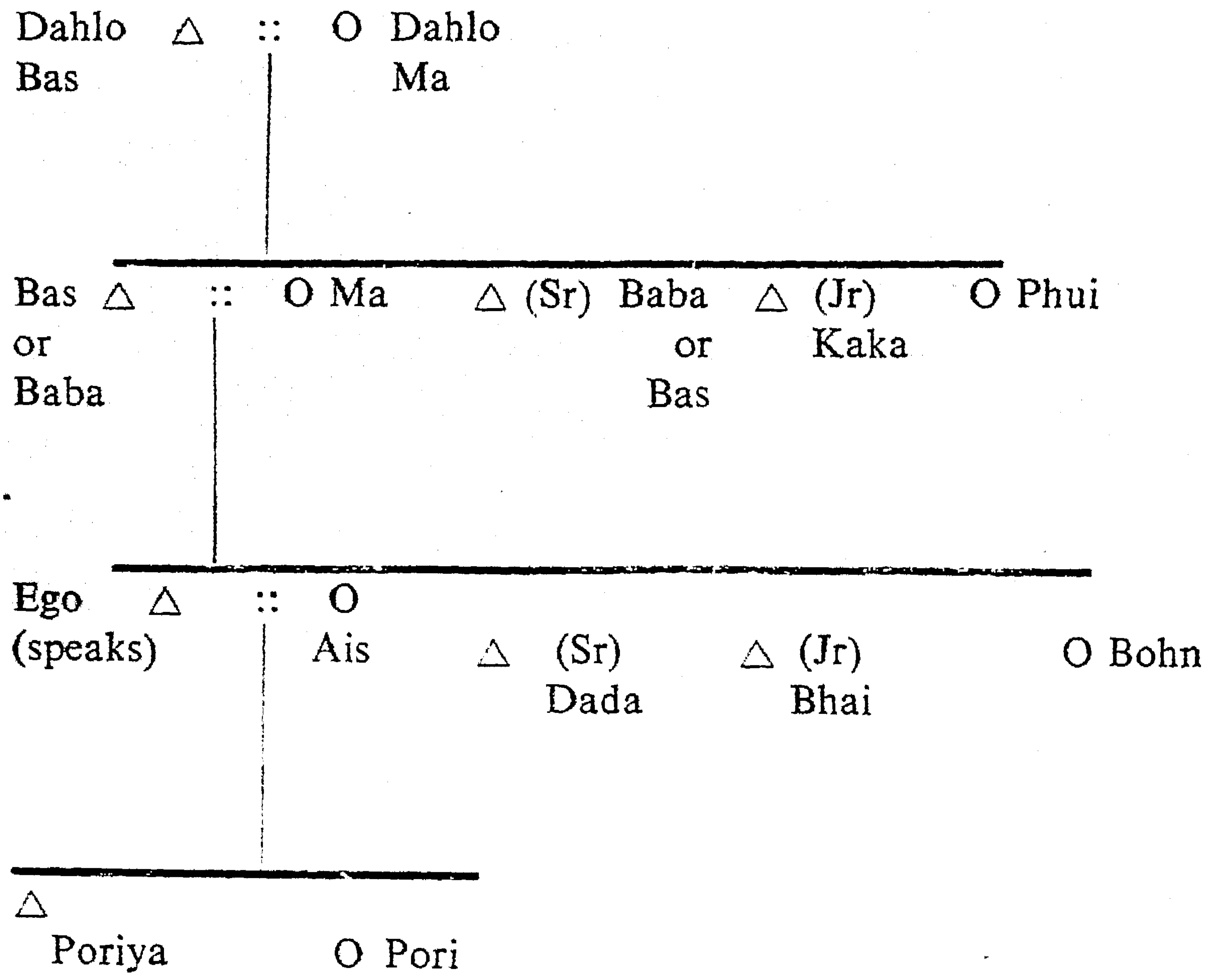
At this stage it would be appropriate to introduce a short explanation of some terms. As used here, nuclear family is a synonym of the term elementary family used above. The term compound family[6] is a blanket term referring to all cases where at least one additional member with its own role-set is added to the nuclear family. Terms like family of orientation and family of procreation are borrowed from Talcott Parsons.[7] The former refers to a configuration of the following roles ego, ego's father, mother, brothers and sisters and the latter to ego, wife (or husband) and children. The term joint family has been used to refer to that compound family which is composed of at least two complete or incomplete nuclear families living in the same household. Minimal lineage refers to the lineally related families whose members can trace the lineal relation to some known ancestor. No other terms are suggested for further sub-classification of the term compound family since the possible variation of membership of compound families is well nigh infinite. The term incomplete nuclear family refers to such individuals or couples who have been or are capable of being part of a complete nuclear family composed of husband-wife-children.

III

Most of the terms of reference used by the Bhilalas in their kinship terminology are similar to the ones used by other North Indians; but there are a few important differences which may be clue to the specific differences in the nature of relations suggested by the terms. Let us examine the important kinship terms of the tribals and the Hindu *jatis*.

Figure 2

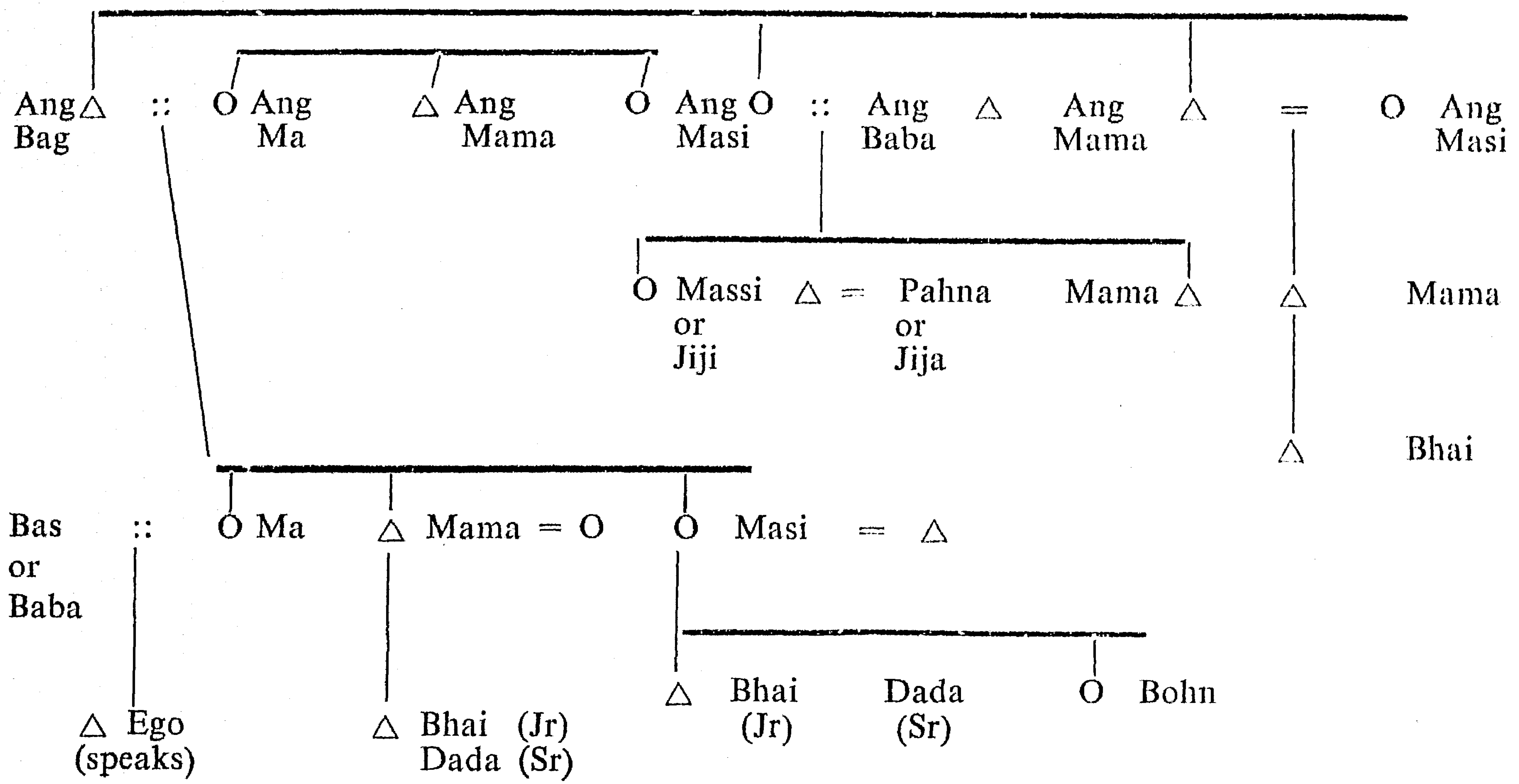
Some Paternal Kinship Terms



Some important deviations from the general North Indian Hindu[8] pattern may be noted here. Among the Adivasis there is a much wider extension of the basic kinship terms than among the plains Hindus, for example, the term for father (*Bas*) is extended to father's father (*Dahlo Bas*), mother's father (*Ang Bas*)

Figure 3

Some Maternal Kinship Terms



and father's elder brother (*Bas or Baba*). The term *Ma*–mother–is also similarly extended to mother's mother, father's mother, father's elder brother's wife. Extension of the terms son (*Poriya*) and daughter (*Pori*) to all the succeeding generations and the terms brother (*Bhai*) and sister (*Bohn*) to the peer generations is the same as among the rest of the North Indians. Another difference to be noted between the Bhilala and Hindu kinship terminology is that the Bhilalas have a smaller number of specific terms of reference than the plains people. In father's family of orientation one has father's younger brother, *Chacha*, the elder brother, *Taoo*, father's sister, *Bhua* and in mother's family of orientation mother's brother, *Mama*, mother's sister, *Masi.* But among the Bhilalas specific terms for father's elder brother does not exist.

In the Hindu patrilocal family, there are two other specific terms of reference (these, kowever, always do not correspond with the terms of address), namely, *Pota* and *Poti*, (grandson, grand-daughter) and in the matriline, *Dohta*, *Dohti.* But among the Bhilalas no specific terms of reference exist for grandson and daughters. They are addressed by the general term *Nanha* (little one) or *Poriya, Pori* (son, daughter)–the terms used for all the succeeding generations. Terms of reference are a basic diacritical method of separating roles. Probably the existence of fewer specific kinship terms in the Bhilala extended families[9] may be due to the lesser denstity of relations within the Bhilala extended kinship units which are required to emphasise the specific roles. At the same time since in their traditional view the lineage is accorded great significance; we have among them a simplified extension of basic kinship terms to generational groups.

IV

Besides the "normal" nuclear and joint families, there are also a number of compound families, whose structure suggests two types of adjustments which a family has to make in response to unfavourable natural and social circumstances. There are some families where a son-in-law lives with his wife's family of orientation. In Bamanta, there were only two such cases.

Uxorilocal residence may take place only under special circumstances. The most common reason given for this is the absence of male issue in the wife's family, so that the girl's parents marry their daughter only to a man who is prepared to come and live with them as a primary member of their own family. Usually only "poor" persons agree to this condition. One of the two cases of uxorilocality in Bamanta was due precisely to this reason. In the second case, the man had come to his brother-in-law's house mainly to look after his orphans. This meant that as the eldest person in the house of his dead brother-in-law he was head of the family consisting of his young brother-in-law and sister-in-law, as well as his own wife and children.

An young man may sometimes offer to pay for his bride by a number of years of service at his would be father-in-law's house. One such case is : Jetru of Jamra clan was kept as a ploughman by Kishan on the condition that after Bhongi attains marriageable age he would be married to her. After two years of service he was betrothed and a little later married to Bhongi. Since Kishan's son was as yet only four years old he asked Jetru to keep on living with them to which he agreed. After a few years Kishan died and Jetru became head of the household. When Nathu (Kishan's son) grew up and married, Kishan's land was divided into two shares, one going to Jetru and the other to Nathu.

Compound families are also formed of near and distant affines and agnates living with a complete nuclear family. In such cases the affines were either orphans or starving or old and handicapped persons who would not have been able to survive the rigors of nature. The family also fulfils social security functions for such cases. It is of interest to note here that the tribal communities have no beggars or religious mendicants.

V

A number of families, who live in the same hamlet and can trace their origin to the known ancestors, that is, a minimal lineage feel the obligation of supporting each other in adverse

circumstances. Members of a minimal lineage are expected to be the first to express "belongingness" for each other at certain times, such as marriage, births, deaths, ancestor propitiation ceremonies and during *Ujban* and *Pithwara*. A minor lineage consists of those agnatically related persons who live in the same village and recognise each other as belonging to the same agnatic group (*Kaka Baba'n*). A major lineage would include agnates living in nearby villages. There agnates often visit each other and meet at weekly markets. Maximal lineage[10] may be thought of as composed of all those persons who recognise each other not only as belonging to the same exogamous group but are also called to the *Ujban* (final ceremony of "spirit's release after the death). Sometimes two maximal lineages within a clan (*Jati*) of the same name do not participate in each other's *Ujban* though taboo on marriage between the two is strictly adhered to. As an example we may mention Baharmia Bhaidyas and Bhaidyas. Branches of both these maximal lineages are found in Bamanta.

A relative expresses his "belongingness" in many ways. At the most general level it is expressed by joining a particular ceremony. At the time of marriage the participants have to identify themselves as cognates of either one of the spouses. If they belong to the groom's party they have to adopt a submissive attitude and good naturedly bear the railleries, practical jokes and abusive songs of the girl's party. The closer relatives, such as mother's brother have to come with giffs of clothes and, if possible, with *Bhangi* bands to the marriage party of their sister's sons or daughters. The father's and their sons are of course expected to share monetary burdens and also take part in manual and organisational work. One can see them cooking, serving, negotiating and distributing ritual offerings (*Prasad*). Although conventionally the agnates are expected to be the first to come forward to help on such occasions, usually they do not spend so much money as the *Mama* (mother's brother).

In every marriage of a girl, the relatives and friends identified with the girl's family, give to the girl one to five rupees in the form of a ritual salutation. The bride sits partially veiled in

the centre of the inner room (*Ghar*). She is surrounded by the sisters (real and classificatory). In front of her there is a bell-metal dish, containing water and a few grains of rice. All her male relatives surround her. The one's closest to her come and squat near her. Her playmate-girls (classificatory and real sisters) flank her on both sides and sing. The bride has her hands dipped in the dish. The relative who wishes to offer her a gift also squats in front of her, dips his hands in the same dish and then folds them in the gesture of a salutation; afterwards he quickly takes both his hands to his forehead, touching it with his fingers. This is repeated four times. Simultaneously, the girl also salutes her relative in the same fashion. After the salutation the male relative puts the gift in the bride's hand. If he is not a real brother or one of the close relatives, then she gestures refusal by not opening her palms and coyly turning her head. The man insists saying: "Come sister, take it now do not disappoint me. Alright, when I come to meet you in the toddy season you can feed me with a chicken and toddy". The bride then hesitatingly takes the money and dips it in the water. The sisters sing out "so and so brother came and gave five rupees to our sister, sister cry hard and forget not your brother".

Death calls for piacular behaviour. The hamlet in which the death takes place, the hearths are not lighted for that day and for twelve days after the death the classificatory and real brothers, sisters and parents of the deceased do not take meat or liquor. Mother's brother and his children also observe the same formality. The body of the dead is cremated on the same day. If the dead person is young, then his parents or those standing in their place, bathe the body before cremating it. An old man's body is bathed by his sons. Women from the hamlet come to the dead person's house and wail for the dead man. A few representative women may also come from other hamlets. There is not a very elaborate ritual distinction between close relations and the distant relations. Women do not accompany the funeral procession. The procession is headed by the Balai drummer who gives a particular unvarying beat on his drum. The dead body is clothed in new garments and a silver coin is placed in the

mouth. The pier is lighted by the closest male agnate. Pujara too has a function in the ceremony. It is his job to apply a little turmeric and *Ralo* (Rice) on the forehead of the dead body after it has been bathed. He acts as the master of ceremonies at such rituals.

For arranging the *Ujban* ceremonies, the *Bharjhela* or the burden-carrier who is usually the *Muki* of the clan and who collects money from each member household of his *jati* (clan) that he knows. Members of his local lineage are his closest shares of the burden. They collect wood and leaves, contribute grass and millets for the expected guests, prepare sun-shades with leaves and sturdy logs of wood. The clan members living outside the village contribute towards the expenses. At the time of the *Ujban* the affines of the clan members also accompany them. They bring goats to be sacrificed at the feast. From the time the clan council decides to hold the *Ujban* until the final day of the ceremony no meat is cooked in the homes of the clan members and no one is supposed to consume liquor.

Srinivas has developed the concept of "concern" [11] in the context of the Coorg society. He has shown that different acts of symbolic nature by different kinds of relations express differences in their belongingness. Close relations bring white cloth and bands. "Cross nephews" or "cross cousins" or nieces bring a gift of red cloth. Affines bring *Sameya* (gifts) consisting of coconuts, coconut oil, puffed rice, cooked meat and three sweet dishes. Among the Bhilalas there are few such instances of minute ritual differentiation between specific kinship relations; but more generalised differences between the affines, maternal cognates, and paternal relations are noticeable. On the whole, agnates have more comprehensive and non-specific duties towards each other and there are rituals to express a closer involvement of the agnates with each other. The mother's brother has specifically defined duties towards his sister's son as well as towards his brothers-in-law. There is a certain flexibility about the behaviour expected from the distant affines. They may or may not behave on the same lines as the "brothers and sons". Usually

they participate in the ceremonies by being present and by giving gifts of money and/or sacrificial goats. Because of patrilocality patrilineal relations are a kind of extension of the primary family in which too great a specificity of functions is not possible. The affinal relations—because they originate with marriage, which may be considered to have an element of contract—become relatively more specific. At this point one sociological paradox may be mentioned. Although agnatic relations within the local community are stronger than the affinal relations. But when the agnatic groups fission and disperse their relationships become weaker than the affinal relationships between two distantly located families. This shows that agnatic relationships are based essentially on spacial contiguity of individuals, whereas the affinal relationships are essentially a mechanism of transcending spacial distances.

VI

There are two convenient points at which we may begin our description of the developmental cycle [12] of the Bhilala family. Each of the points may also be thought of as a moment of "striking roots" for the "family-to-be". With marriage a male and a female come together not merely as opposite sexes, but as social entities-husband *(Lara)* and wife *(Lari)* whose union is sanctioned and brought about according to recognised social norms. Before the marriage, the young boy and girl have had some freedom to flirt with unmarried persons of the opposite sex, this freedom is somewhat more strictly curbed. Marriage therefore may be considered as one of the convenient points to begin a consideration of the biological family. The other convenient point for locating the beginning of a "family" is when it comes in its own after it has founded a household. If we begin with the establishment of a nuclear family household as a result of rupture in the family of orientation, we have a better demarcated point to start with. The establishment of a household is also a much sharper social symbol of the coming of age of a new unit of society.

At least for a short while the newly united Bhilala man

and woman live in the house of the father of the husband. After some time (the actual time varies from family to family) during the early summers when people are available for *Parji* (labour loan system) the family of orientation of the husband builds him and his wife an independent house at a convenient spot within the same hamlet, and gives them a portion of the family land and other necessary equipment to start a new social and economic unit. In quite a few cases the period of joint living of the nuclear family units of the adult son and his father drags on for a number of years. This situation, which is not common, leads to the creation of a family structure which is similar in some respects to the typical Hindu joint families. But even such cases of joint families are different from Hindu joint families in some important strucvural features. We shall encounter these differences in the next section.

VII

In an earlier chapter we have mentioned that the age at marriage of men and women is around seventeen for girls and nineteen for boys. This means that both husband and wife are prepared to grapple with most of the problems of organising the household. The wife knows most of her economic tasks and is conversant with the social etiquette of her husband's family; since in most cases, the cultural distance between the families of the two spouses is very small. Husband and wife continue to have close relations with their relatives and particularly with the husband's family of orientation. Sometimes the newly married girl needs guidance or help in some matters, such as treating a sick child, in sewing a skirt or mending a shirt, etc, then her mother-in-law or sister-in-law can often help her. Besides women also keep each other company.

Although the young man has acquired a new house and some of the basic necessities from his parents on separating, the "joint family" may still remain an economic unit for a considerable number of years at least in connection with some of its production activities. For example, in most cases the third quality uncultivable land was found to have remained unpartitio-

ned right until the death of the head of the "joint family", whereas, often, good quality land, fruit and palm trees had been partitioned even before the actual establishment of separate households of the married sons. Husband, wife and young children form a vary close-knit unit. Until the children have grown to the cow-grazing age *(Gowar)* which is between seven and thirteen they sleep close to the couple in the same room or part of the house. At about the age of six the child is encouraged to sleep in the verandah *(Potsal)* of the house. Often the father may also join him there with his *Charpoi* (string bed) while the mother sleeps with the younger children.

The upbringing of children is fairly a smooth process. Since the mothers have to go out on work, while the infants are still very young, there is only a minimum of "carrying the child." The mother breast-feeds the child as long as she has milk. The child starts eating cooked food together with cow's or goat's milk when it is only a year old. The child is also very often looked after by the father but only after it has grown up enough to eat or nibble *Rotli* (flat bread). It is not an uncommon sight to see a child snuggling up to the bare body of his or her father. A person going to the market on a bullock cart will often put his year old child in his lap while he slowly drives his bullocks. Children begin to play with their agemates in the neighbouring houses as soon as they can toddle out of the courtyards of their houses. When they are a little older they begin to accompany their parents to the fields. While the parents are engaged in their agricultural work they can play about under a shady tree or pick berries. Often when the father is out watching the fields the children can be seen playing around him.

VIII

As the children grow to be eight or nine years and find it more convenient to spend more of their time with their agemates from nearby houses, the affective distance between the parents and the children begins to grow. Whereas in the period of total dependence of children, husband, wife and children formed a physically close knit social unit, now the bond of the primary

family becomes looser. Both sons and daughters keep a respectable distance between themselves and the parents. This habit is maintained even after the division of property, when they are themselves heads of the households. They will, for example, usually avoid sitting in the same gossip groups with their fathers or mothers, and even when they do, they will not cut jokes.

Adolescent boys and girls belong to separate play groups. It is only at collective dances, during marriage feasts, that young boys and girls come together as groups. But occasionally a boy and a girl may flirt with each other, taking advantage of meeting at a marriage party or a visit to the market. No one minds an occasional affair between a boy and a girl belonging to the "right" clan and tribe, as long as it does not become "scandalously" blatant. A scandal would take place if the girl were to become pregnant or the boy and the girl were found sleeping together. Under such circumstances, the girl is beaten and made to say that she was being forcibly "spoiled" by the young man, so that the parents of the girl can sue him for damages before the village *Panchayat* or *Bhanjgadya* (mediator).

IX

Heads of the families are always adult males who are physically and mentally able to take on the functions of leading the families. The head is responsible for dealing with all the external affairs of the family, affairs which lead to contacts with members of other families, clan and the people of the town. His authority is also accepted for all the activities of the family concerned with production of crops, fruit gathering, cattle grazing etc, as well as consumption of the produce and spending the family's income. He is legally the only owner of the major assets.

The legal concentration of all power in the hands of the head is, in most cases, offset by other equally strong tendencies within the family. The Bhilata economy is a labour-intensive economy. The Adivasi ekes out his living from a generally harsh and niggardly environment by dint of his labour. Each adult member of the family, therefore, has his or her importance as a

worker. The head of the family has a major responsibility for the organisation of the household as a production unit. On the whole, he finds that if he gets willing co-operation from his adult sons and his wife, his farm functions more economically. Because there is relatively not too great a derth of land, at least for the Bhilalas, a cruel and too demanding father or husband can force his sons or wife to run away to another relative or another man. The wife of the head in particular takes a keen interest tn the organisation of the household. The husband never undertakes any important business without consulting his wife. Where other adult members of the house are affected, he usually consults them as well. On the whole, the Adivasi household is not of the authoritarian type. This is of course not to deny that outwardly the authority of the male is emphasised in the norms of behaviour. For example, the sons – even the adult independent sons – maintain a certain reserve in the presence of their father.

When the head of the household grows, his ability to lead the family deteriorates and gradually he gives up his hold over the management of his family. He may still continue to suggest a few things as regards the time of the sowing or harvesting; his opinions are very closely listened to. He also continues to guide the youneger members in the correct performance of rituals and ceremonies. In fact the old *Mukhi* of the Bhaidyas became the *Bharjhela* (burden-carier) for arranging the *Ujban* of his clan.[13] He may even show some interest in the outside visitors to the family. But his tasks are now limited and he spends much of his time just watching the little toddlers in the house, while their mothers are away in the fields. He may engage himself in shelling peanuts, or Charoli nuts, or spinning hemp strings. On an occasion he may even take the cattle to graze along with his grandson. He would thus be engaged in resting or doing such things that children of nine or ten are expected to do at home. At the same time he is honoured in the community and given precedence. For example, when members of a family sit down to drink, the centre of a *Chorpoi* will always be left for the old father. Often the adult sons will not sit on the same *Charpoi* as

their old father, though the little grandson might. Though he may not do it often, if the old man accompanies his sons and grandsons on a country path, he will still be the one to lead the line.

Among the women in the house, it is the wife of the head whose authority is supposed to prevail over others. The relations between family members, however, are not based on authoritarian fatherhood despite the rituals of etiquette which expect the sons to respect their father. The reason for this familial "democracy" is probably in the custom of early separation of married sons. The father is more a respected leader of the family rather than a feared ruler. The wife of the head of the household has power within the house only next to the head. In fact, the head and the wife function as a close inner "core" of the family with a high degree of unity. The opinion of the wife most often carries the greatest weight with the head of the household. To the male the social significance of a wife is inestimable. From the time a man and a woman marry, their partnership in nearly all spheres of life is very close. The woman helps the man in many of his agricultural activities. Besides helping their men in the field, women also look after their homes—cooking, cleaning, sweeping, fetching water, etc. A woman is also an object of social prestige for a man. When the husband and wife go to the local bazar the husband walks in front carrying his bow and arrows and the wife walks a few paces behind him, carrying a load over her head. He is her *Malak* (master) and she is his wife (*Baer*). A man who has been able to "purchase" a wife is socially and financially solid; his worth in society is very much higher than of one who has been unable to afford a wife.

Through his wife the husband (and his family) establishes alliances with other families and clans, his social horizons thus expand. For a woman too, marriage is a means to the completion of her biological and social personality. It is only through her husband that she can fulfil her motherly instincts without at the same time coming into conflict with the social norms. By identification with her husband she shares the authority and prosperity of her husband together with his trials.

The husband-wife relationship undergoes certain changes during the course of the family's development. Until the children are born it is expected that the husband and wife will have tremendous sexual desire. The husband's friends tease him for his desire to be with his wife. As long as the "newly" weds live in the household of the husband's father, they are usually allotted a separate portion of the same house to sleep in. For the first year the wife frequently goes to her father's house and the husband has to take her there as well as bring her back from there to his own house. As a result of his going to and from his wife's village the husband grows friendly links with the wife's younger brothers and cousins (classificatory brothers). To some extent this early period of life is a happy overflow of the time of playful youth, both for the husband and his wife.

With the birth of a child the burden of work for both husband and wife increases. In addition to looking after the child, the wife has also to help her husband in their newly established household. As more children are added to the first one, this burden increases still further and the affairs of the household consume more and more of the husband's and the wife's time and attention. The husband-wife relation now incorporates not only rights and obligations implicit in the parent-children relation but it has also to take on the additional function of ordering the sibling-relations. During this period the wife is unable to go to her father's house, as often as she did before. But her younger brother or brother's son visits her to get her news and convey messages. Thus conjugal relations intertwine with affinanl relations.[14]

X

The father is particularly fond of his daughter. It is said that when she goes away to her in-laws she will have to work hard. So at least she may have a care-free time while she is unmarried. However, sometimes the attachment of the father to the daughter makes him reluctant to marry her off when she has grown to the marriageable age. Eloping is, however, recognised as one of the legitimate ways of establishing permanent unions

and this is often resorted to. In the village eight cases of such unions had been noted. There are also cases when a father wants too much for bride price and this delays the marriage of his daughter. One day Pamla went to his brother's wife's village and stayed there for four or five days. During this time he came in contact with Desri. She had grown of marriageable age but because her father was asking for too much money her marriage was being delayed. Pamla and Desri decided to run away. When her father came to know of this, he visited Bamanta with a *Bhanjgadya* (mediator) and demanded Rs. 200 for his daugher as bride money. The case was ultimately settled for Rs. 125.

XI

Brothers and cousins of about the same age are as much like friends as the youth living in the same or close-by hamlets. The older brothers are, however, treated with a certain reserve. Although, on the whole, the relations between siblings give the impression of being smooth, tensions are inevitable. Ideally, between brothers and sisters there is a tender attachment which lasts through their lives. There is however another aspect to their relationship. The customs recognise the rights of the brothers over their sisters and *vice-versa.* It is the brothers and not so much the father, who are most vociferous in their protests and demands in case their sister is carried off by an outsider. And it is the brothers who fight the last ditch battles to get their due of the bride-price. The sisters too must get their presents when their brothers are married. One of she rituals connected with bringing in of the bride by the groom to the father's home symbolically expresses the prior right of the sister over the brother. "When the marriage party of the groom returns with the bride, the groom's sister stands in the way of the groom and his new bride at the entrance of the house and lets them enter only after a rupee is given to her by the groom".

During summers married sisters may come to spend a few days with their brothers together with their children. The brother too may visit his sister's home. The sister treats him especially well, by offering him chicken and toddy. But the brother

is not supposed to stay long in her house. When a brother visits a sister's house he always takes with him some presents for his sister's children. Unlike the Hindu society where one may be somewhat familiar with one's *Mama* (mother's brother), among the Bhilalas, the *Mama* is not treated with too much familiarity. But at the same time not as much "reserve" is shown towards him as towards the father. It is usually with the help of one's *Mama* or *Mama's* sons and daughters that the *Bhanoj* (sister's son) often finds his life partner. When a boy elopes with a girl he first informs his *Mama* of his adventure. The *Mama* may sometimes accommodates him until a *Bhanjgadeo* (mediator) has made preliminary approaches on the question of bride money.

XII

We have mentioned that ordinarily, married sons live separately from their parents. There is however one important exception to this general tendency. It is usual among the Bhilalas that the parents live with their youngest son in their old age. This happens almost in the unintended course of events. The older children get married and go off to their own homes and by the time the youngest son gets married and has children, the parents have grown to a mellow old age. The youngest son also does not show as great an independence of his parents as the older ones. Usually, he is the best cared for child in the house, because by the time he is born there are usually the older ones who can look after him. His mother too has, generally had more experience in bringing up children. She also has more time to devote to him, since the older chidren have by then grown up enough to help the parents in their work. Besides this developmental factor, the youngest son is also the customary heir to his father's portion of the land and valuables. Even his material interests, therefore, link him with his father.

XIII

Besides the joint families composed of aged wife and husband, and the family of procreation of their youngest son, there are also a number of households where two or more married sons live together with their parents. This is however

generally recognised to be only a short phase in the developmental cycle of some families. Ultimately each one of the nuclear units establishes a household of its own. The compound families are somewhat similar to the Hindu joint families. But even among these families the nuclear units are accorded a very high degree of autonomy. For example, each of the nuclear units is given a separate corner of the house or a separate suite of rooms with a running verandah to sleep at night. When the parents are engaged in work, their children, most often, stay close to them rather than be with their grandparents.

When we say that the nuclear unit has a defined existence we do not wish to suggest that the compound family has no life of its own. It has, and it is not merely a summation of the activities of the nuclear units. Each individual in the joint family is also its member individually. For example, there are many duties which a member has to perform for the household as a whole. There is a single kitchen and the cooking is done by one of the women for the whole household. The cattle belongs to the whole household and they are fed and cared for by those who have been told by the head of the household or his wife. The *Gowar* children have to take out the cattle and the goats of the household for grazing. The water is stored for the whole household in pots by the women. Toddy is served to every one in the family by an elder member of the family. Normally the leader the household is obeyed without much grumbling. Ordinarily men and women engage in chores that need to be done without too much prodding from the head or his wife. But there are occasional bickerings against a lazy son or a daughter. The most frequent cause of quarrels in the family is work. Often a daughter-in-law or one of the siblings finds herself overworked whereas another young member spends his time doing nothing or in company of friends; this can sometimes lead to an exchange of hot words or even some physical fist fighting. Tension generally mounts up during the harvesting season because of the rush of agricultural work.

In recognition of the individuality of the adult members of

a compound household, as well as separate identity of the nuclear units within it, plots of land are parcelled out to sons and occasionally even to daughters-in-law of the head of the household. When a daughter-in-law enters her in-laws house *(Sasural)* there is a ceremony whereby she salutes the father-in-law. But she consents to do so only after she has extracted an exclusive right over a piece of property. In some cases it may be a demand for jewellery but in most cases she asks for a she-buffalo or a cow. Besides this the father-in-law may also offer to the daughter-in-law a mango or palm tree or a plot of vegetable land. Even while the nuclear units of the adult brothers live together they often have separate plots of maize land and trees; so that they can have some income separate from that of the joint household.

XIV

The above description may suggest that family life of the Bhilalas is singularly free of internal conflict. This is the "normal" situation. Behind the norms of avoidance and rules of etiquette are concealed inter-personal tensions between husband and wife, father and adult sons, and between siblings. Sometimes the tension does erupt into violent behaviour. There was, for example, last year (1965) a case of a deliberate murder of a man by his wife. In one case a person "D" beat his wife whenever he was drunk, which was a fairly common occurrence. There are frequent cases of murder and violent fights between brothers. But such a case has not taken place in our village (Bamanta). Quarrels between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law and between sisters-in-law are relatively more frequent in joint families. The daughter-in-law comes ususally to a united family and brings about a division in it. As long as she has no household of her own she has to work under the authority of her mother-in-law who is supposed to be, in theory, a mother-substitute for her but in fact may act as a strict task master. Some of the harder tasks are passed on to the daughter-in-law, she must bring water from the well, grind corn and carry home headloads of straw and wood from the forest. While she has to work hard she has to be very strict about her taboos. For

example, she must not sit in front cf her father-in-law and must always keep her face veiled. She must not address or argue with her mother-in-law. As among the non-tribal castes, wives (and husbands) do not utter the name of their husbands.

XV

Marriage brings about an extension of the nuclear family. It also brings to the fore tensions which portend fission of the compound household. This happens due to the following factors: firstly, the desire on the part of an adult married man to become the sole "master" of his own family. The second, and more powerful factor, is the introduction in the family, through marriage, of a woman, who, because of having been reared in a different familial environment, has lesser ability to accommodate to her mother-in-law. The family tensions generally arise over the issue of "work". The girls are treated rather leniently in their parent's home before marriage, but after marriage they are expected to work hard for the whole compound family. The fact that the boy's parents have paid, often heavily, for the bride, does affect their attitude to the newcomer in the family. Since the mother-in-law and the daughters-in-law share the burden of the many of family chores, mutual bickerings are also more common among them. The grownup sons then ask for division of property. But quite often the division of property follows at the initiative of the parents themselves, soon after the marriage of their sons. Unlike the traditional Hindu family pattern in which such a division is looked upon as an unavoidable calamity the Bhilalas take it as a natural development of the family. But the most important reason for the preferenee for nuclear household living is that it is better suited to the practice of agriculture as already explained earlier.

XVI

After the division of the family into more than one household unit, some of the mutual obligations, ritual and personal, persist. Generally, the dividing nuclear units live in the vicinity of their old abodes, so that they can depend on their closest relatives for mutual help in times of need and informal give and

take. The children of the two families visit each other frequently and may often spend hours playing with their cousins in each other's houses. Merely living in separate houses does not give the younger ones in the family the right to flout the conventions. The daughter-in-law must veil her face in the presence of the father-in-law and the elder brothers-in-law. The younger age group must obey the elders whether they live in the same or different houses. For economic purposes, however, the separated families belonging to the same "extended family" are independent units. Exchange of labour (*Parji*) takes place between the families of two brothers and of a father and his son. Generally, monetary or other help given is expected to be returned in kind or money. In case of conflict and crisis the whole of the minimal lineage is expected to act together for its defence. For example, when the Patel's house was burgled, all the families tracing their origin to Mal Singh (the Patels' father) together with some of the men from the neighbouring Pujara hamlet and Lohar hamlet of Mayala went about investigating the incident. Most often one extended-family is found resident in one residential locality but there are cases where the same extended-family has its nuclear units living over different hamlets. A hamlet may be populated by more than one minimal lineage. These families may be related to each other.

XVII

There are many cases of marriage by elopement. If the elopers are unmarried people of the "right clan" the matter is most often settled amicably after payment of bride money. The irregularly united couple are a source of danger to themselves and their lineages. Until their cases are settled they are under the threat of being attacked by the family of the women. Even by the lineage of the man they are not accorded the status of being married. The man cannot propitiate the household deity and his fate in the after-world is also not too secure. (Therefore many people arrange a marriage feast and ritual sometimes in their old age so that their spirits may be released through appropriate performance of ritual after their death.) Marriage by elopement is the most common cause of quarrels between local

lineages, because elopement is always claimed as kidnapping and, therefore calls for reprisals from the lineage of the kidnapped woman. When elopement of a married woman takes place, the conflict between the families of the two men may be very bitter and prolonged. Usually the local lineages of the feuding parties have to suffer the consequences.

"Dudwa is a Baharmia Bhaidia Bhilala residing at present in Pujara hamlet. Dudwa's wife, Lakhi, was first married to an old man of Karadia clan of a village in Nanpur circle. She was dissatisfied with her old husband, who was suspicious of her and often beat her. She had to do all the household jobs in his house while step-daughter-in-law ill treated her. One day she met Dudwa through one of her friends. Dudwa's first wife had died and he was eager to get another woman. After some time Dudwa and Lakhi eloped. When Lakhi's husband realised that she had disappeared he went to her brother in Kanpur and complained to him. He also demanded the bride money back from the brother. A few days later Lakhi's brother came to know through an intermediary of Dudwa that she was living with him and he was ready to give her bride money to the brother together with the fines so that it could be returned to her husband. After some bargaining Lakhi's brother agreed to let the matter drop for Rs. 500 out of which he promised to pay back the original bride money to Lakhi's ex-husband. Dudwa claimed that Lakhi's brother did not return the money to her ex-husband. Instead he incited him to organise raids on his new-brother-in-law's house. Dudwa had his house at Khapri hamlet where his house and the neighbouring houses were attacked many times by raiders at night. Ultimately he and other Baharmia Bhaidyas shifted to Pujara hamlet. But even there no peace was allowed to Dudwa by the raiders".

XVIII

Social relations with the utrine kin are not as intimate as they are between the locally resident members of the partilineage. But even then relations with maternal cognates are not unimpor-

Whenever there is a feast in any family, and marriage is the most frequent occasion for a feast in a village, both affines and agnates of a family participate. For various rituals, brothers, sister's husbands, mother's brothers have special roles. The relation between mother's brother and sister's son are especially close. In case of irregular marriages (marriage by elopement) the first halt of the eloping couple is usually at the *Mama* (mother's brother) of the boy. Often it is he who takes on the responsibility of looking after the welfare of the family of his sister in case of the death of his brother-in-law.

Prem Singh, "member" of Giri hamlet, has one of his nephews living with him. His age was 14 when I first met him in 1960. Jaimal's mother had recently died and his father had married again. Jaimal did not feel very happy at home and so he had decieded to come and live with his mother's brother. "When Jaimal grows up will he go back to his village or will you give him land to live in Bamanta? I asked Prem Singh. "That will depend on Jaimal, if he likes he can stay with me. I will give him land to settle on. Otherwise he can go back to his father after his marriage and settle down on his share of land".

Very often people shift residence to their maternal villages when drought conditions in their village become unbearable. A few examples may be cited here. Valoo of Jamra clan came over to Bamanta with the small family of wife and one child in 1957 from his village and settled with his maternal uncle, Vesta. Similarly, Chain Singh of Masania clan came to Bamanta with his father when he was young, His father had immigrated during the famine of 1915. In another case, a whole family of the sister came over to Bamanta to live under the protection of her brother. Makadia of Balai *jati* and Vaskalya clan is another case of the immigration of a segment of a lineage. Vesta's father died and his family came upon bad days. His father's brother looked after them for some days. But in 1958 their crop failed and Makadia decided to move away from his village Kharpai and came to Bamanta where Rumania, her mother's brother, was the village guard and could help them to earn their living. Makadia, his

mother and two younger brothers, live in a hut constructed within the same compound as Rumania.

Just as there are cases of Bamanta receiving immigrants, there are also cases of the Bamanta people migrating to other villages. Dashrath of Bhaidya clan is today settled in Nimar, along with his other agnatic relatives. His grand father had migrated there during the famine of 1901. Today they do not even speak the same dialect as the Alirajpur Adivasis. But they came to the Ujban in 1961.[15]

XXI

During the spring and early summers people often leave their houses to visit their relatives. The sun is, by then, not too hot and palm sap is available in small quantities. The agricultural work is at its minimum and people have enough time to spend on gossip, drink and travel. At this time a socially important person will receive guests from very long distances, even across State boundaries. In a large number of cases, these guests *(Mejban)* are near or distant affines. An intelligent informant explained his social contacts outside the village by saying : If you have daughters and sisters married to good *(Varoo)* and prosperous people you are lucky; you have some place to go to even though for a short while. But you are even luckier if you have many *Mame* (mother's brothers), you can go to their houses and stay for a few days. Your *Mama* or *Mamero Bhai* can take you further to his *Mama's* house and thus you may go as far as Dhar in one direction and Banswara on the other.

In arranged marriages the affines, and particularly the *Mama,* generally play the role of *Bhanjgadeo* or the mediator. The role of the *Bhanjgadeo* is accorded a ritual significance during the marriages when the *Bhanjgadeo* ties the groom (*Lara*) a red turban just before the crucial *Phere* ceremony.

The affines whose villages are closeby are considered more or less close friends and can be asked to join hands in case of conflict with rank outsiders or give help in case of some trouble like theft, fire or a police case, etc. At the time of marriage, the

older affines of the family in which the marriage is taking place are identified with it. For example, they will think of themselves as *Bhai-Bete* (brothers-sons) rather than as *Pahne* (outsiders, guests) in comparison with the new affines. This often results in ambiguous situations when a family is, relation-wise, equi-distant from the two marriage parties. Kirpal of Plazda had come to Remta's marriage. Since Remta's mother was from that village, Kirpal was a kind of mother's brother to Remta. At the same time Kirpal belonged to the same clan as the bride's mother and was therefore a kind of mother's brother to her as well. When he was seen with the bride's party he was quickly called away and berated for not being with the groom's party. He, however, spent some time with both sides. In fact, he was conveying to the bride's people many of the requirements of the grooms party. For example, when the groom's party were cooking meat he went to the bride's people to get spices as the custom demands.

The affinal relationship, in its extension, covers the whole local leneage. Whereas a specific or descriptive term is used to indicate immediate affinal relation, a person belonging to the same village and clan as one's immediate affine will be termed *Pahna*. It is itteresting to note here that the term *Pahna* would be used to refer to all classificatory siblings of the immediate affinal relation, and this would include not only the local lineage but also the village community. There would be a similar extension of "relationship" in the case of mother's local lineage and village community, would be addressed as *Mamere*.

XXII

Most villages are multi-clan. In Bamanta we find families of seven different clans. But Bhaidyas form the overwhelming majority of population. It seems that at one time Bamanta was inhabited mainly by the Bhaidya families who were organised into a close-knit political community. This is obvious from the fact that it has a permanent traditional office of leadership in the *Mukhi* and has also its own exclusive priest, whose duty it is to propitiate the household deity of the clan. We may call

Bhaidya's the dominant clan of Bamanta since they have (a) more persons than any other clam, (b) a prior claim over the terms of ancient residence, and (c) most of the traditional leaders are Bhaidyas. The patel, Mukhi, pujara (priest) and the Badwa (medicine man) all belong to that clan. Even today the local clans are well-kint sub-structures within a traditional primary community, such as a hamlet. On the whole, there is a close correlation between clan membership and neighbourhood enclaves within the residential localities. But it would be incorrect to say that clans were the only political community rooted in their exclusive villages. This conjecture is based on the well-known facts about segmentation of clans and their movement to entirely new areas. Bhaidyas of Richhvi village, for example, had divided into quite a few segments and were now found in such villages as Aklu, Champa, Bukdia and Dubla Jheri. The Bhaidyas of Bamanta too were to be found in many villages of Alirajpur, Jobat and Kukshi Tehsils. This tendency to segment must have been fairly old.

If we define "political" as a process of establishing order for the purpose of co-ordinating individual and group wills,[16] then local clans could also be considered political groups; since through the institution of the dominant clan relations within a local community were, and are, ordered. However, since the larger clans are dispersed they cannot act as political entities unless they can develop leadership institutions, in the same way as the modern castes are developing. How the local lineages can act as political groups was demonstrated by the political alignments in the voting for the general elections in 1967. Under the leadership of Bamanta's Patel and "Member" (Panchayat) the people of Bamanta had always solidly voted for the Congress candidates. This was despite the fact that in 1961 there was serious estrangement between the Bhaidya minor lineage of Giri hamlet and Patels lineage. Giri people suspected that Patel had arranged the ruthless beating of some of the Giri hamlet boys by the police. If Giri people did vote for the sign (two bullocks) supported by the Patel it was entirely due to the influence of Prem Sing "Member", who was himself a leader of the Giri

hamlet and a person very close to the block officers. In 1965, at the marriage of Dudwa's daughter there was a violent quarrel between Dudwa's elder son and Jhapadya Patel's younger brother. The resentment generated among Dudwa's lineage–Baharmiya Bhaidya of Khapri hamlet—resulted in a vote against Patel's chosen symbol by all voters of Khapri hamlet including the three Balai families.

In the case of conflicts between lineages in different but neighbouring villages, the possibility of mobilising support from one's own clansmen and through affinal networks, lineages of clans was always there. However cross-cutting ties made it impossible for the offinal allies to remain steady supporters.[17] I quote here from the field notes of mine to demonstrate this statement. When Vesta Rawat of Lakhmani brought Gujri of Masania clan Phata village, Gujri's father came with his village folk. Beside many other persons from Mayala and Bhana Rawat belonging to different clans, he had also brought with him an elder of Masania family of Bamanta and their Bhaidya relatives. Together they formed quite a powerful gathering of local lineages belonging to different clans. As the representatives of the two sides went hot and cold over the issue, Jhapadia, the Bhaidya elder who was related to both the Masanias as well as the Rawats, was encouraged by the Masania elder of Bamanta to intervene so that the quarrel may end (*Jhagdo Bhanji jaï*). Jhapadya very diplomatically introduced the issues of compensation that must be paid to the girl's father if the Rawatyas wanted to keep her. In this way accusations of kidnapping were side-tracked.

Despite the fact that in actual practice the loyalties, even of the families of the same clan are quite often divided, there is a belief that they can be depended upon far more than the affines. As Mal Singh Mukhi said: "No dout he is lucky who has *Pahne* (in-laws) in all corners of Alirajpur and Jobat and Kukshi, but he is luckier still whose *Kaka Baba'n* (agnates) live close by, and the world respects him who has many of his own *jati* (clan) to help him in need". With *Pahne* it is always a relation of recipro-

city, but the support from "one's own" (agnates) comes as a matter of loyalty to *Khatrya* (ancestors). The question now arises, if the local clans were the organised political community, how did the village as a political community fit into the picture? How did it maintain its unity in circumstances of conflicts between lineages of different clans. Statements by older people suggest that conflicts arose mainly on account of kidnapping of women. Occasionally, highway robberies and illegal occupation of neighbour's lands could also trigger off conflict. I was, however, unable to get any concrete cases of interlineage conflicts arising from such cases. In case of conflicts the mediators were usually found from among the common affines or Rajput Jagirdars. The residents of the village who were not of the dominant clan were usually their affines.

The affines acted as a necessary bridge between lineages and hence also the villages. Their cross-cutting loyalties, to some extent, reduced the tension between the conflicting interests of the local lineage.

XXIII

The political organisation of the local clan was centred around the *Mukhi*—the clan chief and thc clan council. Even now each clan has a *Mukhi* but in his place the Patel, as the representative of the government, has come to be the leading personage of the village. Probably arranging *Ujban* ceremonies is the only major functions left to the traditional leader of the clan. *Ujban* is held every 20 to 25 years at the instance of the *Mukhi* who as the *Bharjhela* (responsible person who shoulders the burden) calls together all the dispersed families of the clan from all over the region. The main function of this festival is to release the souls of the dead members of the family so that they may be born again. To the *Ujban* come not only the clan members but also the relations, through marriage, of the clan members who have a part in the rituals that are performed by the members of the clan. The *Ujban* feasts are partaken of by the villagers of all *jatis*.

The last *Ujban* that took place in Bamanta was in March 1962.[15] Many of the Bhaidya clan families and their affines had come to this ceremony. One of these families had migrated as far as Khurrampura village in Nimar district. Below we quote from one observational report given by Shri K. M. Chowdhry about this family. "Today Dashrath Bbilala from Khurrampura of Nimar Khargon came with his family. First, he met me and was glad to know that I am also a Nimari and can speak the Nimari language. Later I took him to the *Mukhi's* house. There he and other members of his family greeted the *Mukhi.* The ladies went to the inner room and met the *Mukhi's* son's wife. After five minutes, the *Mukhi's* daughter-in-law started weeping, while weeping she wailed aloud the names of the dead persons in the family. This ceremony is called *Murdko Dena.* I contacted Dashrath at night. Dashrath's father's name was Nanka and Nanka's father's name was Vesta. Vesta used to live in Bamanta. But do to failure of crop (famine) he went (alone) to Khurrampura (Dhar district) and settled there. They (the late Vesta's family) came to Bamanta only at the time of *Ujban*, otherwise they maintained no relation with Bamanta Bhaidyas."

From Chowdhry's report we learn that not only had the Khurrampura Bhaidyas given up the Bhili dialect of their region but also adopted all the economic and cultural traits of their host society. He wrote: "Dashrath himself was wearing *dhoti* in the style of the plains people of Nimar"—the style of his turban and jacket also showed thorough acculturation. He referred to the Bamanta people as *Langotia's*, a term used contemptuously by the more plainised Bhils and Bhilalas of that region to describe the Adivasis of Alirajpur and its environs. Although Dashrath owned less land than an average Bhaidya farmer of Bamanta, his income was far more than theirs because of the adoption of cotton cultivation in his region.

Cultural distance and new idendtifications with the culture of the neighbours considerably weaken the links between different dispersed segments of the clans. Revival of the traditional kinship relations takes place only once in few decades, at *Ujbans.*

Speaking metaphorically, at these ceremonies the dead unite the living. Dispersal of the clan and its periodical gathering has a positive effect in broadening the "social horizons" of the Adivasis. If the dispersed clan were never to come together again, the "prodigals" would have been as good as lost to the clan, but their *Mudko Dena* puts the clan into touch with their lost "sons" and neighbouring cultures whom the relatives represent.

XXIV

Each clan (*jati*) or lineage has a deity of the clan called *Ghirsari*. The image of the deity is made on the pillar of the inner room supporting the roof. The image is a simple stylised form of human beings, often a couple of them. They are drawn in saffron colour. A number of spots of saffron are also indicated on the foreground of the images. The *Ghirsari* (literally household deity—it is derived from the sanskrit word *Griheshwari*, the goddess of the house) is propitiated on all occasions of ritual significance for the family, such as at *Navai*, before the new crop of vegetables is harvested and at *Duda Puja* when the new crop of maize is ritually dedicated to the *Ghirsari*, and at marriage or birth of a child or the recovery of a member from an illness. When there is a marriage of a member in a house, the bride or the groom is asked to offer his obeisance to the deity and the *Pujara* (priest) of the clan propitiates the deity with food and drink and redraws the old images in saffron. He prays to the deity thus: "It is the day of so and so's marriage, he is your son and asks for your protection. All your other children are also present. If we have inadvertently spoken any wrong words in your presense or done something that may have displeased you, then forgive us; we offer you food and drink". From this time (*Tola Porna*) the bride or the groom must undertake a fast until his or her marriage. The groom must not move away from the place next to the *Ghirsari* pole until he leaves the house to go and get his bride. The bride too does not leave her *Gudra* (quilt) beside the *Ghirsari* until the marriage ceremony.

The *Ghirsari* is also propitiated on other occasions when a member of the house is about to launch on a long journey or

begin some new venture such as building a new house. Besides *Ghirsari*, the ancestors (*Khatria Deo*) are also propitiated. The ancestors are given a symbolic representation in the form of a number of stylised lineally drawn figures on the wall opposite the *Ghirsari*. It is believed that the spirits of the ancestors keep living in the house and taking active interest in the life of their living descendents. When a person swears in the house or does something that he ought not to do *Khatria* reminds him by a mild rebuke mainfested in the shape of a minor accident. Thus, the parents keep taking interest in the health and moral living of their descendants in the same manner as they had done while they were alive. Rituals of daily life again and again impress upon the family members the existance of *Khatria* amidst the family. *Khatria* get oblations of drink from every one any time one sits down to drink toddy or mahuwa wine.

If a guest (*Mejban*)[13] comes home and a chicken has to be cooked for him, the chicken is sacrificed in the name of the *Khatria* and its blood as well as a little *Daru* (liquor) and a little rice are offered to it while decapitating the chicken. The rites centred around the deities of the family help in the creation of an atmosphere of familial accord and a feeling of security supported by supernatural forces who are thought to be ever present and ever alive to the behaviour and needs of the members of the household.

XXV

Property of the family consists of land, cattle, implements, trees, consumable livestock, consumer goods, silver jewellery and monetary assets. As long as the children are unmarried, the question of dividing the property is rarely raised. But soon upon the marriage of a son, his portion of the ancestral property, particularly land, is divided and handed over to him by the father. The system of inheritance followed amongst the tribals is very similar to that followed amongst the peasantry in the Punjab and some other Northern regions. According to this system the co-parceners in a property unit are the male members of a nuclear family. This differs from the *Mithakshra* system by which the coparceners are the male members of a joint family.

In *Mithakshra* no distinction is made between a living son and a grandson at the time of the division of the property. In the Punjab system, the grandson inherits, out of the share of his father, and not of the whole joint family. The tribal system of inheritance is however different in a few respects from the Punjab system. The division of property in Punjab takes place, usually during the old age of the father when the possibility of his producing more children is little. Among the Bhilalas the eldest son may be given a portion of the land at the time of his marriage, when his father is himself quite young. Later male additions to the nuclear unit of the father will be relatively at a disadvantage as regards the share of property coming to them.

A few of the cases are noteworthy in Bamanta. The daughter of a Bhilala was given a share in the property of her father, since she had come back to stay with him after the death of her husband. In another case, the uxorilocal son-in-law was given an equal share in the property of his father-in-law. In another case, Chain Singh, who is the father's sister's son (cross-cousin) of Bhurlu, got a share in the property of Bhurlu's father, when he got married. His father had come to Bamanta to rear Bhurlu and his sister after the death of Bhurlu's father. Bhurlu's mother had gone back to her parent's house leaving the children behind in Bamanta. According to the tribal custom, the mother had no independent right over the children; they belonged to the family of the father. In case the mother intended marrying again she must be prepared to give up her children. After the cousins grew up, each of them got a share in the property of Bhurlu's father.

The customary rules of inheritance seem to take into account a numer of things. Firstly, the property is shared between those members of the family who live on the ancestral lands. Thus, if a person migrates very far away from the ancestral lands, he loses all claims over them. However, if his children come and wish to settle in the village they can demand, theoretically, some land to live on. In one case a distant agnate (Surjia) of Bhaidyas came to Bamanta and according to custom was given

land by Gulab Singh out of his own unused lands. Later on Gulab Singh wanted him to quit since, as he said, the land revenue was being paid by him. Surjia maintained that he had only got what was due to him as a Bhaidya. The case was ultimately settled with the help of the mediators from within the village. The disputed land was handed over to the occupant on the assurance of compensation to Gulab Singh. The land revenue, henceforth was to be paid by Surjia and land records adjusted accordingly. Secondly, not only the men but also women living on their ancestral land have the right to inherit it. Indirectly, their children too can be claimants to their mother's share in the ancestral property.

The right to property can also come through adoption. In most cases the persons adopted are cognates living in the village. The above rules are therefore not violated in case the co-parceners are not agnates. The house is inherited by the youngest son. This is the usual concomitance of ultimo-geniture. The youngest son inherits not only his father's house but also his land. The youngest son has therefore more land than his elder brothers. I have mentioned in another context that adult and adolescent members of a household are often given, for their own personal profit, some productive unit of property. For example, a daughter-in-law may be given a buffaloe or several chickens. The profit or use of this piece of property is left strictly at the disposal of the daughter-in-law.

After his marriage the young man establishes his house. He gets land, necessary agricultural implements, bullocks, cows, buffaloes, etc, from his father. After he has settled down in his own house with his wife, and children, if any, his household follows roughly all the rules of exchange of labour and other forms of reciprocity in exactly the same manner with his family of orientation as with the rest of the agnates. If he asks for any monetary help from his family of orientation he gets it as a loan (some times on interest). *Parji* between two brothers is considered quite normal if they live in separate households. A separated member generally loses his right over the share of his father's

property after his death. Jewellery is held as a personal asset of each member. Usually a mother passes on her jewellery to her daughter at the time of her death. A woman may often let her jewellery be sold by her husband in emergency. But the ultimate decision remains with her.

XXVI

The townsmen often remark about the peculiarity of the tribal ways of living. One of the common remarks is "the tribal is a primitive Englishman" and to highlight the so-called similarity between the Englishman and the tribal they mention some of the personal habits and social customs of the tribals. A school master said: "like an Englishman the tribal lives in houses separated from each other. He does not like to be interfered with by the neighbours, preferring to live with his wife and children and working on his own piece of land. He does not use water to cleanse himself after defecating but instead uses a stone. Again, like an Englishman, he always keeps his wife with himself. His morals are also similar to the Englishman's. Young men and girls can have sexual relations without too many restrictions, and like the English people they have love marriages more than arranged marriages". What is important for us to notice in this rather naive parallel between the English and the tribal cultures is the contrast noticed and exaggerated by the townsmen between their own culture and the culture of the tribals.

Some of the most significant points of contrast between the family structure of the caste-Hindu communities and the tribal family's structure are: firstly, the emphasis is placed on the shorter range of their family system. The breaking point of the joint family, in the tribal family system comes very much earlier. We saw that, on the whole, the nuclear family unit, husband-wife-unmarried children, has a more clear cut status among the tribals than that of the town's Hindu castes.

Secondly, the tribals are markedly more "individualistic".[20] "Individualism" of the tribal is, however, not to be equated with the Western individualism although there are certain similarities between the two.

The desire of the individual Adivasi to have a certain familial privacy is ensured by a number of customs and manners, for example, normally every "nuclear unit" is expected to have a house to itself. Even when, due to some reasons, this is not possible or desired by the members of the joint family each nuclear unit gets a corner of the house to itself for a certain private family life of its own. Even within a family all adults are consulted whenever a decision of importance is made, involving that family as a whole. One of the reasons mentioned for the spatial separation of each house from the other is the desire to be left alone in matters internal to the family. The emphasis of the individual's autonomy is expressed in every family by another common practice by which each member of the family owns something productive apart from the joint property of the family. The "individualism" is, however, not at the cost of loyalty to the family. In fact, it blends with the duties traditionally assigned to each role in the family and the rules of etiquette and avoidances expected of them.

At this moment let us look at some of the external forces which are, though to a limited extent under present conditions, affecting the inner structure of the family. The most important of these "external" factor is increasing monetisation. The immediate effect of monetisation is to increase the number and variety of things the Adivasi buys from the market. Often the things bought are mere fineries and unnecessary to the simple bare existence to which the tribals are accustomed.

With the increasing possibility of spending money on cheaper knick-knacks the chances of friction in the household also increase. This only means that already existing individualistic tendencies in the family get more accentuated. Money has however affected the status of the Adivasi family in another more fundamental manner. Monetisation, and consequently closer commercial links between the tribals and the commercial centres, have tended to make the tribal marriages more extravagant and expensive so much that bride price has increased from about Rs. 150 before 1948 to about Rs. 850 in 1964 for a

Bhilala girl of Bamanta and the neighbouring villages. The phenomenal increase has gone together with a greater variety of things available for the marriage feasts and an increase in the prices during the period. Increased expenditure on marriages has meant greater indebtedness of the family, the impoverishment of its economic resources and these in their wake have greatly increased the tensions within the kin and affinal groups. We discuss this problem in the next chapter from the angle of the law and order situation.

XXVII

Another institution of the wider society that has affected the tribal family to some extent is the law of the land. During the Raja's times any cases of disputes between brothers or relations over inheritance of land or elopement of women were settled through the traditional institutions, such as *Bhanjgadia* (mediators). These *Bhanjgadia* were influential Patels or other locally well-known personalities who knew the local traditions quite well. Their decisions, even when unpalatable to one of the parties in the dispute, were usually upheld by the Raja's court. Since independence, however, according to the assessment of local advocates, a larger proportion of the cases are being taken to the courts at Alirajpur leading to more long drawn and expensive litigation. It is true that even as yet the *Bhanjgadia* is a very well entrenched institution, but here we are only referring to a tendency that may ultimately lead to the creation of the kinship factions which have been a constant feature of the caste society of the plains.

The withdrawal of the support of the central authority for the local institutions for the settlement of disputes and imposition of fines has made these traditional institutions vulnerable to unscrupulous interference from police and other administrative staff. One of the cases reported to me by the villagers illustrates the manner in which the police play havoc on the highly cherished autonomy of the local lineage: Bhondi of Pujara *Phalya* was in love with an young man from the Bhaidya clan from Giri *Phalya*. Since both of them belonged to the same clan their

relationship was considered highly objectionable by the people. Bhondi was severely beaten by her father and in a *Panchayat* of the local Bhaidya lineage the Patel and the *Panchas* decided to fine the boy for Rs. 100 out of which half was to be spent on a communal feast and the other half was to be given as recompense to the parents of the girl. Somebody in the village went to the police station and informed that the Patel had collected Rs. 100 by way of fine from the family of the young man of Giri *Phalya.* The police inspector in charge of the circle came and declared that the village people had no right to impose fines on individuals. He not only browbeat the Patel into giving him the money but also molested the girl by trickery in the bargain.

This case is not the only one, in which because the tribal custom is not given formal recognition, local grievances have led to the invitation for interference from external authority, particularly the police. As yet such cases are not so many as to destroy the tribals' faith in the traditional institutions. Already the Patels complain that the government's lack of support to the *jati Panchayats* (clan councils) is turning people lawless. The autonomy of the tribal lineages, already much curtailed, may not be able to sustain the pressure of the external forces for more than one generation.

XXVIII

The institution which has affected the Adivasi kinship system most profoundly is the weekly market. As already mentioned when the Adivasis go to market they meet their affines and agnates in the town. Even when they walk to the market they meet their affines from the neighbouring villages. This frequent interaction strengthens kinship bonds and also increases the possibility of their proliferation into different and far off areas. The logic of kinship relations is such that wider the kinship links greater the possibility of some persons to shift to the villages of their afflines. Thus, the texture of kinship relations even within the local communities alters, to some extent, as the population of the villages becomes more varied. From the position where a single clan dominates, two or more

clans may share the position of leadership. I have mentioned earlier, that Bamanta, which was, more or less, an exclusively Bhaidya village, has tended to become multi-clan over the last seven or eight decades. This is of course not to say that any village could have stayed exclusively one clan, for any considerable period of time.

Education too affects the family system. There are a few isolated cases of Bhilalas who, after having been educated in Chhatravas and later on in the city schools and colleges, do not wish to return to their villages and families. There is the case of a Patel who got his son educated to become a graduate (B.A.), but found that his son preferred to stay away from his parents instead of being a help to them, he even avoids to spend his vacations with them. There are other cases in which educated boys, after completing their middle-school education, could not get a job as teachers and went back to their parents' fields.[21]

XXIX

The contrast between the family structure of the tribals and the dominant *vanya (Banya)* group in the town of Alirajpur can be demonstrated by a description of the familial structure of one of the *vanya* sub-castes (*jati*) in the town of Alirajpur. We select Maheshwari Vanya's familial structure as an illustration. There are altogether a little over 70 households of the Maheshwaris in Alirajpur. The Maheshwaris are the most prosperous of the *vanya* communities. The leading family among them owns an oil mill, a mill to dehusk pulses and runs two buses on one of the public transport routes. All the Maheshwari families are in business. They engage in the sale of various commodities ranging from grains, cloth, medicines to general groceries. A large number of them lend money, mainly to small money-lenders, but also to some of the villagers. At one time the leading family of the Maheshwaris had the honour of managing the royal stores (*Kothar*) and they are, therefore, known as Kothari.

When a Maheshwari patriaich decided to build a house he did not build only for his family or the families of his sons but,

usually, with an idea of accommodating in the same building at least three adult generations or four to five generations in all. Each prospective house builder had to take permission from the Raja to build a house. The assessment of levy upon the house was made on the basis of the width of the house. Traditionally, about eight feet long wooden girders were used to support the roof. Thus, to make a 21 feet running varandah by the side of the road about three rows of girders were required. For each row of girders (*Chashma*) a certain fixed rate of levy was paid to the State. A well-to-do *vanya* built a house of no less than four *Chasma*. The grandfather of Bhagwan Das Kothari built a house of eight *Chasma* on the main street of Alirajpur town, to-day a huge three-storey house stands on a four *Chasma*-wide piece of land.

There are various stages in the process of fissioning of the Maheshwari household. As long as the head of the household is healthy and in control, usually all his children and their children tend to live as a single joint family sharing not only the house but also the kitchen and work in the business. The profit remains basically in the hands of the patriarch. Often the patriarch allocates the responsibility of running the various businesses to different sons or grandsons in the house, so that in case of division, at the time of his old age or after his death, each of the families of procreation gets what it has been expected to get and trained to look after it. First signs of division within the joint family, arise in the late fifties or sixties of the patriarch when one or all his sons may separate their kitchens and the house between themselves. Gradually the businesses are separated and ultimately, after years of *de facto* separation of the families, the house may also be divided. If the division is between two brothers' families then a two *Chasma* house will be divided into two one-*Chasma* houses.

In the summer of 1965, a survey of the ten per cent of the households of Alirajpur town was done. In the survey sample, seven households of the Maheswari caste were drawn, of these, six households were joint and one household was nuclear.

Until the patriarch of the house feels mentally and physically alive he is the main decision-maker in the business. As his physical and mental abilities begin to wane he depends more and more on the opinion of his younger brothers or sons. But even in old age he expects that all major decisions are made with his concurrence. If in business affairs his (the partriarch's) role is crucial for a long time, in the internal affairs of the family his power is even more pervasive. No decision about marriage and house building or travel, by any of the family members, can be made without his concurrence.

The age at marriage of "other Hindus" (a category which includes all the non-tribal non-scheduled castes) and tribals makes a very interesting comparison. (See table 8)

Table 8: Percentage of Women Married at Different Ages

Age Groups	Other Hindus	Tribals
5–10	1.0 %	.02 %
10–15	23.5 %	.57 %
15–20	78.0 %	48.3 %

The average age at marriage of women in the urban caste-Hindu society is much lower than that of the tribals.

Girls are married fairly young among the caste-Hindus and they adjust to their in-laws (*Sasural*) over a long period of time in such a manner as to become completely absorbed in the traditions of the joint family of their in-laws.

XXX

There are some urban castes which are culturally closer to the rural tribal society.[21] We can take for example the Koli, Chamar, Bhangi and Banya castes to show that the Kolis are closest to the tribal mode of life, followed by Chamars and Bhangis. The Banyas, of course, represent the urban pole. As compared to the Banyas two of the three lower castes show a greater preference for small families. Bangis are an exception in

this matter, Bhangis also have a relatively higher preference for early marriages and joint families, as compared to the other two lower castes. At the same time, all the three lower castes practice widow re-marriage, and the custom of bride-wealth like the tribals. They also practice leviratic marriages. Again, like the tribals, their ritual idiom is less sanskritised than that of the Banyas. Some demographic data culled from the Census of 1941, illustrates the variation in the age at marriage of the four castes. (see Table 9)

From Table 9 a few points of difference between different castes emerge. It is apparent that marriage below six is rare for males as well as females. There is only one recorded case of a Bhangi girl married before seven. Among seven to thirteen age-group, there are a few married Banyas and Bhangis but none among Chamars and Kolis. When we compare the number of married girls with married boys in this age-group, there are indicative differences: girls are married more often among Banyas than among Bhangis. Banyas marry off their male and female children at an early age more often than any other caste. In the group formed of married children between 14–16 we have Chamars as well besides Banyas and Bhangis. One difference between the three cases stands out; whereas unmarried women among the Banyas and Bhangis are a small minority among the Chamars they are a big majority. In the next age group, 17–23, the Kolis are also included.

The interesting thing to notice is that the Banyas begin to marry off their children much before they reach their puberty. This is particularly so as regards girls, 14.3 per cent of whom were "married" in the 7–13 age group. One of my Banya informants told me: "In our society chastity of women is very highly cherished. Parents are always afraid of something which may become a blot on their honour. It is therefore best that girls be married off before they start menstruating." He further pointed out: "Our ancestors were very wise, they realised that our women are required to adjust to the common living in the large joint families. They therefore thought that if girls are

Table 9: Marital Pattern of Four Urban Castes, Seen Age-Group-wise

Caste	Sex	Tot P.	Age Group 0-6				Age Group 7-13				Age Group 14-16			
			T	MR	UR	Ratio MR:UR	T	MR	UR	Ratio MR:UR	T	MR	UR	Ratio MR:UR
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Banyas	M	276	52	0	52	—	44	3	41	10:137	18	2	16	10:80
	F	271	37	0	37	—	49	7	42	10:60	18	16	2	10:1.25
Bhangi	M	306	77	0	77	—	82	1	81	10:810	16	9	7	10:7.7
	F	329	86	1	85	—	70	6	64	10:107	20	13	7	10:5.4
Chamar	M	367	46	0	46	—	47	0	47	—	24	16	8	10:5
	F	257	67	0	67	—	45	0	45	—	14	5	9	10:8
Koli	M	84	10	0	10	—	20	1	19	10:190	3	0	3	-
	F	74	17	0	17	—	4	0	4	—	3	0	3	-

Caste	Sex	Tot. P	Age Group 17–23				Age Group 24–43				Age Group 44–			
			T	MR	UR	Ratio MR:UR	T	MR	UR	Ratio MR:UR	T	MR	UR	Ratio MR:UR
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Banyas	M	276	44	25	19	10:7.6	60	53	7	10:1 .3	46	41	5	10:1.2
	F	271	27	25	2	10:8	66	61	5	10: .8	18	16	2	10:1.25
Bhangi	M	306	25	16	9	10:5.6	79	75	4	10: .5	21	21	0	—
	F	329	29	26	3	10:1.2	84	81	3	10: .4	14	13	1	10: .7
Chamar	M	367	55	47	8	10:1.7	83	75	8	10:1 .6	53	39	14	13:3.6
	F	257	22	19	3	10:8.6	86	84	2	10: .2	11	11	0	—
Koli	M	84	8	4	4	10:10	29	27	2	10:.7	7	6	1	10:1.7
	F	74	12	12	0	10:0	21	19	2	13:1.5	3	3	0	—

Source : Alirajpur Census 1941.

Abbreviations : M – Male; F – Female; T – Total; MR – Married;
UR – Unmarried; MR:UR – Ratio of married to unmarried.

married in their early age they will have enough time to adjust to the circumstances of their life with their in-laws".

The Bhangis, who are very much a part of the urban society and the Hindu caste system, also marry off their children young. But marrying young is not as important in this caste as it is among Banyas. Chamars who are a semi-rural caste are midway between the tribals and the Banyas. Whereas no one from among the Chamars is married in the lowest age group, in the very next group, 14-16, 66.6 per cent of the boys and 35.7 per cent of the girls are married. Chamars seem to marry off their children in their adoloscence and early youth. The tribals, on the other hand, marry off their children in their youth and early adulthood. Among the Chamars as well as Bhangis bride wealth is a common custom. The economic value of a woman is given prominence in their sub-cultures. Among the Bhangis, a woman not only looks after the house and bears children but also earns for the family. Often when a man is unable to perform his job, often due to drunkenness, the women go along to do his duty. Among the Chamars also the women are employed as agricultural labourers. But she becomes useful only after she grows up physically to work as a labourer. That is why it is only after fourteen that she begins to attract suitors. On the whole, the parents of the boy are more eager to get a wife for their son, than the parents of the girl to give away their daughter. This is reflected in the custom of bride wealth.

The Kolis are very much like the tribals in this respect. They start marrying off their children as they get settled in adolescene. And indeed it is well-known that Kolis were a tribal community on the periphery of the Hindu caste sytem only a few decades ago. As among other poorer castes the Kolis also practice bride wealth which means that women are viewed as an economic asset by them.

Besides the scheduled castes there are also the landless tribal communities, such as the Balais and the Kolis resident in the outer hamlets of the town. There is also a small population of the Bhil and Bhilala poor who live in the tribal hamlets of the

town area and come to the town every day to work as labourers. On the whole, however, the town's society is so dominated by the culture of the caste-Hindu groups that these middle groups do not significantly blur the chasm between the rural and urban societies.

XXXI

It would be appropriate at this stage to make a mention of another middle element between the rural and the urban social systems and see if this element is also "middle" in terms of family organisation. In Alirajpur tehsil there are about half a dozen big Bhilala Patels who are strongly attracted to the caste-Hindu ways of life and particularly the Rajput model; but they are at the same time deeply involved with the rural society, of which they are the political leaders to some extent. Some of these Patels have been attached to the Rajput royal lineage by virtue of the common law unions and they, therefore, tend to look for wives from among their equals, in terms of wealth and prestige. While searching for their women they have to go farther away from their immediate neighbouring villages. Usually they get their wives from more advanced regions of Gujarat and wealtheir regions of Nimar, in Madhya Pradesh. In these places the influence of Sanskritic Hinduism is greater than in the heart of the tribal country. It has so come to happen that women among these families not only dress in the fashion of the traditional Rajasthani towns women; such as *ghagra*, skirts and saris, but also tend to give up taking an active interest in the productive functions of their husbands. Though they cook for the household, the water for their kitchens is carried by the wives of the junior partners of the lineage of their husbands or their servants. They do not go to the fields and most of their interests are centred around home. With decreased interest in the economic problems of their husbands, these women tend to be more retiring than the tribal women are generally.

I have not made a systematic study of all the Major Pntel families but my impression is that many of them prefer to have their sons and daughters married off early. The Patel of Sejgaon

told me: "Our people are foolish to keep their daughters at home even after they are grown-up. This is so because they have as yet not realised the value of their honour." The patel of Rajawat had his son married off at the age of fourteen to a girl of about the same age. I said that his son was yet a small boy, and asked him why did he marry him off so early. He replied: "It is good to have a woman in the home always. At fourteen, a girl can do all the chores in the house. Since this year my groundnut crop has been good, I thought I could afford a bride for my son". Tribals get women when they know they will have to or when they can afford to. Poorer farmers wait till their sons have grown up enough to afford a woman. Obviously the girls' parents have to wait before their would-be in-laws are in a position to propose a marriage. Sometimes the parents of a girl may wait until they can get the highest value for their girl. Because the richer Patels can easily afford to pay for their son's brides they can marry early. The number of the relatively Sanskritised Bhilala Patels is very little and the difference between their income and prestige, and the prestige and income of the common tribal (or his village Patel) is very great. The tribal and the non-tribal therefore seem generally to be world apart.

Notes and References:

1. Levi-Strauss writes: "It is wrong to try and explain the family on purely natural grounds of procreation, motherly instinct, and psychological feelings between father and children. None of these would be sufficient to give rise to a family". Cf. Claud Levi-Strauss, "The Family" *Man, Culture and Society,* edited by H.L. Shapiro, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956.

2. A.M. Shah, "Basic Terms and Concepts in the Study of family in India", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review,* Vol.1 (3), January-March 1964.

3. Hsu isolates the following basic relations and their essential psycho-social characteristics:

   Husband-wife: Discontinuiy, sexuality, exclusiveness, freedom

   Father-son : Continuity, asexuality, inclusiveness, authority

Mother-son : Discontinuity, inclusiveness, dependence, diffuseness, libidinality.

Brother-brother: Discontinuity, inclusiveness, equality, rivalry.

One of Hsu's crucial insights is that if one of these relations becomes dominant then other ıelations too get modified. F.K.L. Hsu, "The Effect of Dominant Kinship Relationship on Kin and Non-Kin Behaviour ", *American Anthropologist,* Vol. 67 (3), 1965. See also 4 below.

4. Levi-Strauss's explanation of the place of avuncular relation in the basic set of kinship as distinct from family relations is historic advance in our understanding of the elementary kinship unit. He has shown that the basic unit of society is not the family nor even the roles contained therein, but rather the set of relations between the roles within the primary family and the avuncular relation. Family as an institution of social life arises only when "... a plurality of families ready to acknowledge that there are other links that the consanguinous ones, and that the natural process of filiation can only be carried on through the social process of affinity". C. Leli–Strauss, "Structural Analysis in Linguistic and Anthropology", Basic Books, New York, 1963, pp. 31-51.

5. A.M. Shah, *op.cit.*, (1964), p.2.

6. I have given "compound family" a wide operational meaning in order to let 'joint family' have a more specific meaning.

   Cf. I.P. Desai "The Joint Family in India: An Analysis" *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol.V. (2), September 1956 and A. Aiyappan: "Symposium on Joint Family and Caste in Tamilnad", *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. IV (2), September 1955, p.118.

7. T. Parsons, "Social Structure of the Family" in R. Nanda Anshen (ed.), *The Family : Its Function and Destiny*, New York, 1949, pp. 173-154. The terms were also used by G.P. Murdocle, *Social Structure*, New York, 1949, p.10.

8. Cf. Irawati Karve, *Kinship Organisation in India*, Asia, Bombay, 1965. See Chapter III.

9. *Notes and Querries in Anthropology* (1960) defines extended family in these words "The extended family should be used for the dispersed from corresponding to a joint family", p.72.

10. I have followed E.E. Evan-Pritchard's classification of lineages. See *The Nuer*, Oxford, 1940, pp. 192-5.

11. M.N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*, Asia edition, 1965, pp. 110-114 and Chapter V.

12. Cf. J. Goody, *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1958.

    See also D. Mandelbaum's paper in Anshen (ed), op.cit.

13. Fortes says about the relation between the younger and the older generation as it is reflected in the ancestor cult: "As the son grows up physically and socially, his destiny grows stronger; indeed, it is because his destiny is strong enough that the son succeeds in growing up. This is a threat to father's destiny". However with the physical decay of the father his moral power increases, instead of decreasing and ultimately death..." transforms his mundane and material jural authority into mystical power, that is power which is absolute, automatic and unpredictable." In a milder form the same cycle is repeated in the Bhila domestic life. As the old men become alienated from secular life their say in rituals increases and in rituals of social relations their symbolic prestige is formally expressed. After their death they become ancestors and join the legions of Khatriya Dev.

    See Mayer Fortes, *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion*, Cambridge University Press, 1959, pp. 47–48.

14. Fortes writes : "A significant feature of the developmental cycle of the domestic groups is that it is at one and the same time a process within the internal field and a mevement governed by its relations to the external field." M. Fortes, "Introduction" to J. Goody (ed.) *Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1958.

15. It is interesting to contrast the forms of segmentation of those Indian peasant cultures where the ideology of the joint family dominates, with those of a few others, like the Bhilalas, where nuclear family thinking dominates. Among the Malwa village castes, studied by K.S. Mathur (*Caste and Ritual in a Malwa Village*, Asia, Bombay, 1964), segmentation means break up of a domestic group into smaller independent units each one being at least one nuclear family or even an already well defined joint family. In my own observations among the peasants of Sagar district (M.P.) and the villages around Delhi I have come across the same phenomenon. Among the Bhilalas, the founder of a

lineage in a village is often a lone immigrant who gets married to a local girl and settles as a Ghar Jamai (uxorilocal son-in-law).

16. "Political activities and political structures not only relate to centralised states with roles recognizeable as kings, leaders, legislators, adminstrators, and citizens or institution, such as courts, tax officers, etc but must be conceived in broader terms to encompass the whole process of formation of demands, the determination of policy for the community, the carrying out of policies, the controlling of disruptive behaviour, and the maintenaance — through marshelling allegiance and support — of political order and identity of the political community. These activities and their associated structures may be found at different levels of societies; ranging from kin based villages or bands through association, territorial organisations, up to readily identifiable States.' B. Cohen, "Political System in Eighteenth Century India", *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Vol. 82 (3), 79-1962, p. 313.

17. Significance of "cross-cutting ties" as a means of political ordering seems to be particularly great in those societies which lack strong political authority cutting across primary communities.

    See E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, *op cit.* and J. Van Velson, *The Politics of Kinship*, Manchester University Press, 1964.

18. K.M. Chaudhry, "Bhilala Jan Jatiyon men Ujban", *Vanjati* Vol. XII (4), 10/1964.

19. In Persian Mezban means the host; just the opposite meaning is given to the word in Bhilali.

20. Individualism among some tribal groups has been noticed by R. Benedict, 1951, Op. cit. and J. Van Velson, 1964, Op. cit.

21. "......the religious attitudes of the members of such groups as Mahars, Chamars, Mehtars, etc. are, especially in wilder parts of the provinces, practically, indistinguishable from those of the tribes, the cloak of Hinduism covers them though it may not touch them." *Census of India, 1911* Vol.X, Central Provinces and Berar Part I - Report.

CHAPTER VI

Economic Axis[1]

The Adivasi farm and the farmer's family are a single economic unit. The farmer's residence is the storage dump for his products. The cattle shed is located within the courtyard of his house and may be used, beside housing cattle, as a storehouse for implements and as a maternity room. It is difficult to isolate meticulously the amount of labour and capital expended by the farmer on his various undertakings, since he may be doing two or three things all at once. For example, while the farmer is watching the fields he may also be engaged in twisting a rope. While the time spent on watching has been spent in the production of field crops, that very time is also devoted to a craft. Again livestock has varied functions. Draught-cattle is used for tilling as well as for carrying loads and the cattle-dung is used both as fuel and compost. Milch cattle too, similarly, supply milk, dung (compost) and young stock. Cattle-rearing, therefore, contributes to various areas of farming such as "livestock products", and "field-crops". Obviously, the various elements of the farmer's economy forms a complex as a whole.[2]

II

As already mentioned earlier, the Adivasi builds his house on his farm. Since the land is mostly undulating, the fields have various degrees of slope. The house is usually built at the highest spot on a ridge-like land. Often the land slopes down to the bank of a nearby stream. The land right next to the house is usually bounded by a hedge, and receives the largest amount of compost. This piece of land is usually the most valuable and earmarked for growing maize. For the last few years, a large number of farmers have taken to contour bunding. Along the

contours of a field low stone or earth dams are constructed to stop the upper layer of the shallow soil from getting washed away by the rains. Over a number of years the soil gets collected in the lower reaches of the field and gradually a relatively level field takes form. This maize field is known by the name of *Vadi.* Much of the Adivasi's life and labour revolves round the *Vadi.* Usually a farmer has also other plots of land. Essentially these lands are no better nor worse than *Vadi,* but because they are farther away from a farmer's house they are not looked after so well. Upon these plots of land the farmer grows minor millets and certain varieties of pulses which do not require too great a care.

There are different grades of soil for purposes of charging land revenue. Table 10 gives local names of these soils and revenue rates charged per acre.

Table 10: Settlement Rates (per acre)

	Grade I Rs.	Grade II Rs.	Grade III Rs.
Adan	3.75	3.00	2.50
Badu	2.62	2.25	1.94
Salgatta	2.00	1.62	1.31
Kali	–	1.62	0.94
Rakhad	0.94	0.62	0.33

III

An Adivasi farmer owns a number of trees which are commercially important for him. Alirajpur is known for its mango, mahuwa and toddy. Date palms are also commonly owned. The forest abounds in Mahuwa trees. By a well-established convention the State allows the Adivasis to use Mahuwa flowers and fruits growing freely in and around the forests. The forest contractors are not allowed to cut these trees and use their timber.[3]

The trees require great care when they are young. They have to be watered during summers and guarded against stray cattle. But once they grow up they do not require any attention and provide fruits or sap.[4] A date palm takes nearly fifteen years to mature to yield fruits or sap. Its sap is available from March onwards but its fruit ripens only by June. A mango tree can sometimes grow to be so big that in a good season you can get from it almost forty mauds (about 1600 kilograms) of fruit. If a farmer owns five or six mango trees, he may get an yield worth, anywhere between Rs. 300 and Rs. 500 per season. Mahuwa trees bloom in February and begin to shed their ripe flowers. These flowers are sweet and juicy and make excellent wine. From February to the end of March most of the Adivasi women and children are busy in gathering these flowers from the nearest Mahuwa groves. The Bhils of Gahwan village near Alirajpur own a large number of Mahuwa trees and are accused of being lazy farmers because *Mahuwa Devi* (goddess) is over-generous to them. Sap from a date palm is extracted during January, February and March. It is a sweet juice and is served at breakfast, with *Vasi Roti* (stale bread). Tal palm sap is fermented in pots hung on the tree during the day with the sun providing the warmth and the already fermented toddy acting as the fermenting agent. This juice is available during May and June as an evening or afternoon drink.

IV

The farm is usually owned by a married male member of the household. In a few cases women may also own land, but they have some male member to manage it. Bhongri of Pujara *Phalya* (Bamanta) owned fifteen acres of land. Her husband had come as a *Ghar Jamai* (uxorilocal son-in-law) to her father's home. After Bhongri's mother died her father married again and had one son. When his son married, the land was divided among Bhongri and her brother. Since Bhongri's husband died her land is being looked after by her brother, though she continues to live with her children apart from her brother.

Whatever be the legal position of the man-of-the-house his

de facto position is always that of a head and a guide, at least in connection with the management of the productive resources, such as fields, trees and cattle. But the Adivasi economy is labour-intensive, each adult member has therefore to be given importance in the management of the farm economy. Whenever any productive venture is undertaken all the adult members are consulted. The stable core of a family's economic organisation is the husband-wife pair. The wife helps the man in almost all agricultural activities. For sowing, the woman carries the seed while the man operates the plough to which the seed drill is attached. The woman carries cow dung to the family's compost heaps, and before the rains distributes these over the maize field. The harvesting of pulses is done jointly by the couple. In threshing operations too mutual co-operation of husband and wife is essential. Besides being of help in the field, the woman does most of the arduous jobs at home as well; for example, grinding the corn, carrying headloads of fodder and bringing water from the stream or the well.

Boys between 8 and 13 are called *Gowar* (the cow herds) and grazing the livestock is their responsibility. An average Bhilala household would contain, a pair of bullocks, a couple of cows, a few goats and about half-a-dozen fowls.[6] The cattle shed is usually made of sturdy logs of wood with a loft to serve as a store for hay. By the side of the cattle shed there may be a separate shed for goats, if there are many; and a chicken coop. Young girls, sometimes boys as well, may help older women in cleaning the cattle shed and in storage operations. In joint families an attempt is made to give each son and daughter-in-law some item of productive property. A son may have his own plot of land and a tree of Tal palm, and the daughter-in-law a cow, a goat, or a number of fowl. The process of separating out property for each nuclear unit begins as soon as a son grows up; and it takes on a more definite shape when he brings in his wife into the joint household.

V

The nature of the work on the family farm is so simple

that children learn just by watching so that no instructions are imparted in a formal manner. As they grow in physical strength they begin to do things which they can easily do.[7] A boy begins to take on somewhat less strenuous adult jobs, like driving bullocks on the *Charas* (Iron water buckets to draw water from the well), threshing the groundnut crop, and bringing toddy down from the Tal palm – as soon as he is physically able to do it. By the time he is thirteen or fourteen, he works almost fully like an adult. The girl too begins to feed cattle, clean the cowshed, bring water from the stream or well and distribute compost in the *Vada* (maize plot).

All members of the family, except the very young and the very old, participate in some economic activity practically all the year round. For most of the agricultural operations the labour of family members is sufficient but for harvesting of the staple crops, such as maize and millets larger number of people are required. There are three methods whereby a farmer may gather the requisite number of people to help him with his harvesting, namely, daily wage labour *(Dhadki)*, labour exchange (*Parji*) and, guest labour (*Dhasia*). *Dhadki* is a Bhilali word for daily wage labour. *Parji* means exchange of adult labour days between neighbours. Thus, on one day the neighbours of a farmer will send one adult male or female to go and work on his farm. For this he must give in return one labour day to each of his neighbours who helped him in his hour of need. *Dhasia* means that a farmer calls his neighbours to help him in some such job as construction of a new house for his newly married son, for which he supplies the guests a meal or enough toddy. An informant said that usually it is no good to call people on *Dhasia* for such urgent work as harvesting because the "guests drink and laugh and play, but do very little work". (See Table 11).

Table 11: Informal Help for Meals or'Toddy Beer'

	Number of sample	Number of labour days units	Imputed value of meals/drinks Total Rs.	Per farmer Rs.
Went to Dhasia	25	80	40	0.50
Asked for Dhasia	25	166	83	0.50

VI

Most Adivasi farmers have a number of implements for carrying out various operations within his economy. All these implements and other artifacts used by the Adivasi are either partly or wholly manufactured by the Adivasis themselves. The Adivasi plough is very similar to the one used by the peasants of the plains. Another implement used by the tribals more often than the plough is the bullock-drawn iron rake. This rake is used to scratch and loosen the soil and separate stones from earth. Even in the case of the rake the iron part is imported from the town of Alirajpur and the wooden parts made at home by the Adivasis. One of the most expensive artifacts with the Adivasi is the bullock cart. Its wheels and axles are manufactured in Alirajpur and the "body" by the Adivasis themselves. In order to prepare the wooden parts of the implements the Adivasi makes use of a number of carpenter's tools. At one time he used to employ only an axe to do all the carpentering but he now usually keeps at least a chisel, a saw, and a drill and an axe. With these implements the Adivasi is able to fashion not only his implements but also make the wooden parts of his house such as beams, poles, etc.

Some of the more prosperous Adivasi Patels have bigger houses in the "Rajput" style with large wooden gates and a certain amount of brick or stone masonary work. These Adivasi Patels employ carpenters and masons from the town of Alirajpur or one of the other major commercial villages. Expert masons

were and are hired to prepare brick walls of the wells. Whenever the construction of a house or a well is undertaken by the Adivasi usually local people are called on *Dhasia* to help in the work. A portion of the threshed grains and pulses are stored and sealed for seed in earthern bins. It is only under dire circumstances that these seed stores are opened for consumption. The groundnut is a cash crop for the Adivasi. It is believed that groundnuts are easily attacked by insects; Adivasis, therefore, feel less inclined to store this crop in their houses even though they have to pay very heavy interest on the seed loans from the shop keeper in the town. Normally grains and pulses are sold in small quantities in the market to get ready cash for occasional marketing.

VII

The law protects the property rights of the Adivasi over land. Non-Adivasis are not allowed to purchase land. During the days of the Raja some land had passed into the hands of the commercial castes as a consequence of Adivasi indebtedness. But the commercial castes were never interested in owning land in this region, it being of sub-marginal productivity. The peasant castes, except a few households of *Malis* near Alirajpur town and some Patelias in villages near Bhabra, have left this region unexploited. Because of the association between the land and the dominant clan, despite the fact that land is today individually owned, there is a strong feeling against the individuals selling land to anyone. Unlike the Kondamals studied by Bailey,[8] land has not entered the market in Alirajpur.

Oher than land and houses every other thing used by the Adivasi has a market price. While writing the socio-economic report on the village Bamanta I had tried to make detailed estimates of the monetary values of the things used by the Adivasis, based on the market price of the things (in Alirajpur) or the price of things that went into making the things used by the Adivasis.[9] This exercise had its value for certain purposes. It was, for example, useful in arriving at the relative investment in various economic activities of the Adivasis and the relative value of the

returns from these activities. In the study we arrived at the conclusion that of the "field crop growing", "livestock keeping" and "domestic fruit and sap producing tree-culture", "livestock keeping" was the most uneconomic activity. From this type of analysis one could conclude that special attention needed to be paid to the "livestock keeping", but not that resources should be transferred from this activity to other activities. One cannot apply the generalisations which are valid in a completely monetised economy to an economy which is only partially monetised.[10] Distinction has to be made between the "market price" of a commodity and the "real value" of that commodity to the Adivasi. Take, for example, the market value of such things as toddy and Mahuwa, which the Adivasi supplies to the market (but which, if he could help it, he would not) their intrinsic value to the Adivasi is much higher than would be indicated by the price he (the Adivasi) receives for them. Or, let us take the market price of cowdung cakes in the town. There is no relation at all to the market value of cowdung and the cost of feeding and rearing up the animals that produce cowdung. The Adivasi does not realise the value of cowdung consciously, at least to the extent it is useful to him. The situation is obviously one of imperfect market. Herskowits hits the nail on the head when he says: "The phenomenon of value can only be understood as part of the wider phenomenon of culture".[11]

VIII

It would be appropriate to make a brief mention of the variation in the wealth possessed by various Adivasis and whether this variation is, in turn, strongly associated with differences in the status of individuals and families. In the socio-economic study of Bamanta I had calculated gross income per head per family. I found that nearly 74 per cent of the population of Bamanta was concentrated in the lower income group...between Rs. 100–200 (per annum). Only about 20 per cent of the people lived in families with gross income of more than Rs. 200 per head. Rest of the families, consisting mostly of Balais, had incomes lower than Rs. 100 per head per annum. There were seven "rich families" with income of more than Rs. 300 per head. per

annum.[12] It was obvious that although the income level was on the whole pretty low, even for the "highest income" group, still the variation in income levels was considerable.

The variation in the level of living was visible only to those who were well acquainted with the village life. Only in matters of details was the difference noticeable. For example, the better off Bhilalas tended to wear clothes that were in relatively better condition than the poorer ones. The houses of the poorest were made of the same materials as those of the average Bhilalas, but the tiles on their roofs were often older and broken. The health of the richer people seemed to be, on the whole, better than the rest. This was so because the rich ate better food and in sufficient quantity. The better off Bhilalas could be referred to as *Varu log* ("good people"). Because the good people were more respected, they tended to look after their property and person better than the average people. It was noticed that the hamlet leaders all belonged to "better off" families. These families also tended to play a leading role in the life of the community.

Variation in the family income was corelated with two factors, namely, the amount of land owned and the number of adults in the family. Only the four Balai families owned less than 10 acres of land each. Of the 50 families, only 20 owned less than 15 acres, 20 families between 15 and 30 acres and eight families more than 30 acres. It is obvious that land, the most important item of wealth, was variously distributed among the families. Table 12 makes clear that there is a definite association between more land and higher income. There is also a very definite association between adults per family and income. The association between income and the average number of workers in the family requires some explanation. Land in Bamanta is generally not fertile. Even maize fields around the Adivasi houses yield anything only if they are constantly fed with sufficient amount of manure. Every plot of land has to be prepared with utmost supply of labour. The stones have to be regularly picked and bunding has to be tended every year. Most families have more land than they can look after properly. They have, there-

Table 12: Land Ownership, Income and Working Members per Family

Land Owning Class (acres)	Family No	Adults per Family	Average size of Family	Average Income per Family	Average Income per Person	Ratio of compound Nuclear Families
7.5—10.0	4	2.7	5.5	259	47	
10.1—12.5	9	2.9	5.0	627	125	4.24
12.6—15.0	7	2.3	4.5	649	142	
15.1—17.5	6	2.0	4.3	738	170	
17.6—20.0	6	3.0	6.3	893	141	1.28
20.1—25.0	5	4.4	7.8	1181	151	
25.1—30.0	5	4.4	7.2	1363	189	
30.1—35.0	2	4.0	9.0	1456	162	4.40
35.1 and above	6	3.0	10.0	1025	105	

fore, sufficient work to do on their own lands, during seasons, than to go out and work for wages on the land of others. The number of working people in the family is therefore an important factor for higher income.

Weber defines class thus: "We may speak of "class" when (1) a number of people have in common a specific casual component of their life chances, insofar as (2) this component is represented by exclusively economic interests in the possession of goods and quantities of income, and (3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labour markets". These points refer to "class situation" which may be expressed briefly as the typical chance for supply of goods, external living conditions and personal life experiences insofar as this chance is determined by the amount and kind of power, or lack of such, to dispose off goods or skills for the sake of income in a given social order. The term "class" refers to any group of persons found in the same "class situation".[13] Now, if we try to apply the above definition to the situation in the Adivasi society we realise that despite a certain amount of variation in the ownership of means of wealth and production, the Adivasis cannot be thought of as divided into a number of "classes". Their society lacks one of the most important characteristics essential to a class situation, namely, "the market situation". This means that the life chances of one Bhilala are not so remarkably different from another as to include them in different classes. There is also not a radical difference between the styles of life of one person and another.

The situation among the Bhilalas is very similar to the one described by Tax in his study of Guatemalan Indians. Tax found that though differences in wealth were associated with differences in status, no firm system of classes had developed among them.[14]

IX

The farmers' life is everywhere governed by the change of seasons. The Bamanta Adivasi's agricultural year may be divid-

ed according to various seasons and the labour they call forth from them.[15] Let us begin a description of their agricultural year with *Kharif* (summer) ploughing. The rains come to Alirajpur any time between the middle and the third week of June. The maize land around the Adivasi house (*Vadi*) is the first to be ploughed after the initial showers. Because the soil is shallow and gravelly the "ploughing" is usually done with a *Phadka* (rake) and occasionaly with a light wooden plough. Generally the plough runs against the slope of the field so that humidity is preserved for a longer time; but when the ploughing is seen to run with the slope, the objective of the farmer is different. This way of ploughing helps the soil from the upper end of the ridges to flow to the lower and in this way the levelling of the field becomes quicker. The bund at the lower end of the field is generally made with stones cleared from the field. This type of bund is very effective in as far as it allows the excess water to flow away from the field without carrying with it the bulk of the soil as well. Only a few of the farmers prepare compost in pits. Much of the dung is thrown raw in the fields. A little cow-dung piled outside the house may be distributed throughout the field on second ploughing. After the second ploughing, the earth becomes soft and moist and ready for sowing by the first week of July.

For sowing, a seed drill is attached to the beam of the *Phadka*. A seed drill has one or two ends where from seeds flow out into the furrows. The sowing is thus done in parallel lines about six to eight inches apart. After sowing, the field is harrowed so that the earth covers the seeds. The harrow (*Phan*) which is prepared from a curved log of wood is attached to the beam of the plough (*Hal*) or *Phadka* (rake) which is then pulled by the bullock. The farmer stands or puts a foot on the log depending on the weight required to break the lumps of earth. After sowing maize, the Adivasis begin paying attention to fields farther away from their house. On these fields millets, such as *Sawin* and *Bhadi* (Sorgum Vulgare) and other inferior crops are grown. Little better land is reserved for jowar (a type of milo) and pulses.

By the beginning of August, maize calls for more work. The crop is by now neatly nine to twelve inches high. At this stage, weeding and pruning is done and stalks growing too close to each other are pulled out to maintain the required distance between plants. For weeding, a smaller rake tied to a plough (*Kulpa*) is used. It performs two functions, firstly, it pulls out weeds growing between rows of plants, and secondly it turns the earth. After this operation the plants which are too close to each other are pulled out and fed to the cattle. Any of the weeds that remain are also done away with. Actual distance between plants varies from six inches to a foot depending upon the practice of the farmer. Some go for quantity of cobs and others for their size and quality; usually better quality cobs grow on plants grown more sparcely. Weeding of other crops follows soon after that of maize. The intruments used are the same but because millet and pulse fields are bigger and the crops less valuable, work on these is performed rather casually.

By the last week of September maize is ready to be harvested. Unlike the farmers of the plains who like to roast and eat maize from the cobs when they are still unripe and milky (*Doodhya*), the Adivasi custom strictly prohibits breaking unripe cobs. After the crop is ready to be harvested a religious ceremony called *Duda Puja* is held. The farmer ceremoneously breaks a cob and worships it by placing it next to the wooden pillar of the house. This pillar symbolises "Ghirsari"—the household Goddess. After the worship the cob is hung to the post and left there until the next crop ripens. Harvesting begins only after this ceremony has been performed.

Harvesting is generally done with the co-operation of the whole hamlet. The system of co-operation is called *Parji* in local dialect. *Parji* is, in fact, nothing more than labour exchange. The instrument to cut the crop is a curved sickle (*Dantla*). The harvesters begin from one side of the field and advance in a row while cutting the crop. As the crop is cut it is placed on one side, and later piled high in the field near the house. Only a limited quantity of cobs are shorn of their grain

at a time. The whole cob as such is dried and stored in huge earthen bins *(Kothi)*. For drying, the cobs are spread on a high wooden platform *(Mandwa)* above the reach of the cattle.

The threshing and winnowing of other pulses and cereal crops begin early in November. These crops gradually get ready for harvesting by the end of October. Jowar (milo), *Bhadi* and *Sanwin* (minor millets) are harvested one after another and stored together with the stalks. Threshing and winnowing is done later. The harvesting of pulses follows that of millets. Work on the harvesting, threshing and winnowing of millets and pulses coincides with that of preparation of land for the sowing of *rabi* crops on irrigated and unirrigated land for some of the farmers. The harvesting of *Kharif* crops (millets and pulses) may be delayed to give attention to ploughing and sowing of *Rabi* maize, gram, wheat and groundnuts; therefore intensive work on some of the *Rabi* crops may even continue late into December.

X

Chart 3 gives some information on the major crops grown by the Adivasis. It will be noticed that usually leguminous crops are mixed with the cereal crops. This is scientifically the most inexpensive way of preserving the fertility of the soil. Whereas the cereals extract nitrogen from the soil the legume fix nitrogen. To some extent the loss of nitrogen is repaired in this fashion. Adivasis also practice a fairly developed form of crop rotation. Whereas the *Vadi* land (Ist quality) is never left fallow and at least a certain amount of maize is always grown there, all the other plots are left fallow for at least one year out of five. In the second quality land the following six year cycle of crop rotation would be normally practised.

Ist year : Bajra (cereal); with some mixture of Urdi (pulse)

2nd year: Urdi (pulse)

3rd year: Kulthia (pulse)

Chart 3

Agricultural Cycle of Bamantans

Crop	Time for sowing	Time of harvest	The quality of land used	Crops with which mixed	Remarks
Maize	Last week of June to first week of July	Third week of September to Second week of October	I Grade (*Vadi*)	Chawla and chillies, gram	*Vadi* is also often used for vegetables, chillies, castor seeds, etc,
Bajra	Between the end of June and middle of July	Third week of September to first week of October	II Grade Adjoins *Vadi*	*Urdi* (pulse)	II quality plots usually undergo a six yearly rotation of crops
Sanwin (minor)	Third week of June to first week of July	Second week of October	Grades II and III	*Urdi*, tur (pulses)	III grade plots have seven yearly rotation
Kulthia (Pulse)	,,	,,	,,	*Sanwin* (minor millets)	
Groundnut	First week of July	Second week of October	Grade II	gram	
Irrigated wheat	November (2nd week)	End of March or April first week	Grade I (irrigated)	gram	In Bamanta only two farmers sometimes grow wheat in small plots.

4th year : Sanwin (cereal); mixture of Chavla (pulse)

5th year : Groundnut (fixes nitrogen); mixture of Chavla (pulse) (strip cropping)

6th year : Fallow

The second quality land usually adjoins the *Vadi* (1st grade). Porttions of this land often develop after a few crops, into first grade land capable of producing a good maize crop. The rotation of crops on the third quality land follows roughly the same pattern except that the land is left fallow for two years. The fallow land usually produces grass which is harvested and stored. It also provides pasture ground for the cattle.

The Adivasi farmer (particularly the Bhilala) shows a sufficiently good grasp over agricultural techniques as far as crop rotations and ploughing, weeding and harvesting are concerned. But this does not mean that further improvements in his techniques are not urgently needed. According to the Agricultural Extension Officer of the Block, summer ploughing is done in only 20 per cent of the area brought under plough and post harvest tillage does not extend to more than 50 per cent of the same. Barring some villages, the manuring of fields is also done by simply throwing raw dung into the *Vadi*. Pit composting was practically unknown in the region until the extension workers introduced it in a few progressive villages, such as Bamanta.

XI

The *Zaid* crops, that is, vegetables, are grown on irrigated land. During the monsoons and winters *Zaid* may also be grown in portions of the first quality non-irrigated land. Vegetable fields are hedged, and in the case of some vegetables, such as brinjals and tomatoes more regular weeding and turning has to be done. Some of the progressive farmers have started using chemical fertilisers, such as super-phosphates and ammonium sulphate, particularly for their crops of chillies. Tal-palm and date palm are both sap exuding trees. A Tal-palm's normal life is anywhere between 50 and 70 years. It begins to give sap by the

time it is ten years old. A palm tree grows to the height of nearly 40 feet. Between February and June every morning and evening the Adivasis climb up the palm trees to collect sap. Date palm is another juice-giving tree. It is less tall (nearly 30 feet) and stately than the Tal palm, and gives a sweet-sour juice *(Sindi)* in profusion. *Sindi* starts in December and continues till mid-March. It is drunk unfermented.

XII

The nearest forest is about five miles to the south of Bamanta, near village Kanpur. Some of the wood, required for construction, and for fuel is brought from this forest. Ripe Mahuwa flowers and *Teemru* fruits are also gathered from this forest. Mahuwa flower ripens in early February and is used for preparing wine.

Now-a-days bamboo is scarce in this part of the country. The nearest bamboo forest is nearly thirty miles away in Kathiwara. Because of its great usefulness someone in the family has to make an occasional trip to that forest as well. About fifteen miles away, in the south-westernly direction, is a grass forest in Kanpur. When the resources of local fodder are low, trips have to be made in that direction to bring fodder for the cattle. Table 14 and a sociogram given at the end provides rough information on the working cycle of the Adivasis.

XIII

Brief mention has been made earlier about the cattle possessed by an Adivasi farmer. A brief discussion of the role of livestock is made at this stage. Bullocks are as absolutely essential to the agriculture of the Adivasi as to the peasants in the plains. Without bullocks ploughing, turning the soil, harrowing, etc, would not be possible. Bullocks are also used to pull carts, which serve as a necessary means of transportation of goods to market, and grass, wood and men over distant places.

Cows give milk, but it is rare to find a good milch cow. They are kept more for their dung and livestock rather than for

their milk. It would be a rare cow that gives three kilograms of milk per day at the height of her lactation cycle. Goats are kept for milk as well as for meat. Normally the guests are served fowls. Every family keeps some of these, so that during the toddy season, when the guests come, there is a bit of meat to liven the food and drink. When a chick is to be served it's blood is first offered to the ancestors. Chicken are also sold in the market for ready cash. They are, therefore, a substantial help during the scarcity season (summer).

XIV

Data on indebtedness are difficult to obtain.[16] It is an area of privacy which the outsider is not supposed to know. Adivasis do not usually refuse to answer questions on indebtedness but one cannot fully rely on their statements. Their replies may be guided by various motives. They may, for example, either report exaggerated amounts of debt, if they feel that the government may be ready to help them; or understate in order to present a prosperous image of themselves. Again many of the less intelligent and backward tribal farmers do not remember or care to remember, details about their debts. Therefore, when information is sought the tendency is to give the easy answer, "No debts". The most common debt incurred by the Adivasis is in connection with the borrowing of groundnut seeds. The conventional rate of interest levied for groundnut seed is to return double the quantity at the time of harvest. Cereals are generally purchased on loan during the scarcity season when the prices in the market are usually very high. The repayments of these loans are done after harvesting—when the market prices are at the lowest. The Adivasi therefore loses much more than the usual 50 per cent interest he is expected to pay on the loans.

Nearly 71.5 per cent of the loans got for investment purposes in Bamanta were obtained from either the Block Office or the revenue authorities. These were, in nearly 90 per cent of the cases, either to purchase bullocks, or for mending or constructing irrigation wells. No loans are reported for building purposes. Table 13 gives information on the number of loans

for three broad categories for which they are obtained as also the relative burden of these loans as indicated by percentages of the total on each of the three accounts.[17]

Table 13 : Loans Taken

Purpose for which loans taken	Number of terms (N : 123)	Percentage of the total amount of revealed debt
Investment in Agriculture	26	63.87
Meeting current agricultural expenses	75	20.70
Meeting consumption expenses	22	15.47

Table 14: Creditors

Creditors	Number of loans (terms)	Percentage of the total amounts	Average sizes of the reported loans Rs.
Usurers	41	41.83	177.3
Tehsil and Block	82	58.22	63.7

The traders collect exhorbitant rates of interest from the Adivasis—ranging from 100 per cent for seeds to 25 per cent for long-term loans for marriages, etc. It is possible to maintain some divergent rates of interest because very often the shor-term loans are given in kind and long-term loans in cash. The normal rate of interest in Alirajpur market was 2 per cent per month which amounts to 24 per cent per annum; but since the usurer always deducts a certain sum from the principal towards account-keeping charges (*Khata Rakh War*) real rate of interest comes nearer to 25 per cent. As many as 123 recorded loans when classified according to the source give us the picture of the role of the two sources in the credit system of the tribals as shown in Table 14. The term "recorded loans" has been used

simply because the author suspects that the extent of indebtedness is much greater than is being brought out by the investigation.

Each of the tribal families has its *Sahukars* with whom it is a normal custom of each family to maintain account. Having a *Sahukar* in a market is exceedingly important not only for having a "stand-by" when the family requires seeds or money for some urgent purpose, but also because the debtor has a patron upon whose hospitality and help he can rely. Having a *Sahukar* gives him prestige in his society and the better off farmers have their *Sahukars* in more than one market centres. Having more *Sahukars*, of course, only implies having running accounts with more than one banker; thus to be indebted might also be viewed positively. A *vanya* of Alirajpur told me an illuminating anecdote about one of "his" Bhilalas: "A Bhilala once gave me some money to keep. Since he owed me nearly the same amount in my books, I told him that I will cancel his account (*Khata*) 'No, no, *vanya* don't do that, you keep the money I give until I need it but do not cancel my *Khata*'. These people believe that it is unlucky to have one's name cancelled from the account book of a *vanya*. The account is cancelled only when the debtor dies without any offspring".

The situation has a remarkable parallel in the Irish peasants studied by Arensberg, among whom debt is synonymous with relationship. An Irish peasant will pay off a debt finally to show his anger with the creditor.[18]

The above account expresses one of the tendencies in the relations between the Adivasis and the commercial elements in which the element of traditionality appears. The truth is however not one-sided. Contract, bargain and competition are also present in the situation. The following excerpt from my field notes shows that the *Sahukars* have to be constantly on guard to protect their clients from being "snatched away". "H.L. Jain is a prosperous wholesaler and retailer of Adivasi clothes. His younger brother and his son look after the banking (*Biaj Ka Kam*) part of the family business. Their debtors in Gahwan, Ram

Singh Ki Chowki have since a few years been shifting their loyalty to Hate Singh who had taken advantage of the fact that the younger brother of Hira Lal had to be away to Bombay and Ahmedabad on account of cloth business. Hira Lal told me; "*Baboo Ji*, this business is not as secure as it appears. One has to keep giving and taking (*Len*, *Den*) from one's clients regularly even when one knows that they (the Adivasis) cannot return all the money that they owe you. There is one *Asami* who owes me more than Rs. 2,000. We have been doing business with him since his father's time. Last year I needed some money to marry off my brother. I threatened him that unless he returned my money he would get no more credit from me. Hate came to know of it and straightaway offered to lend him money, knowing that basically he was a sound farmer".

Even when the *vanya* knows that he may not be able to get back the principal he is not too concerned, since he is more interested in the regular payment of interest on loan rather than the principal. In another case, the Adivasi quietly shifted his clientele from one *Sahukar* to another since – in the words of the Adivasi – "I forgot all about the payment to the vanya because he did not come to me for two years".

XV

At the time of the harvest many of the *vanyas* go to their Bhilala client's villages. With one quick glance at the state of the harvest the *vanya* guessses the possibility of getting the interest in full and also commodities for marketing. If he sees the crop to be good then normally he does not even mention the return of the principal amount; instead he talks about the purchase of the crop. Since the Adivasi is under his obligation he agrees to let his *vanya* have the whole of his groundnut crop at a much lower rate than prevailing in the market. He does not give the Adivasi his money but asks him to deliver the stock to his shop. When the Adivasi has taken the stock there he makes some deductions from the sale amount towards "weighing" "charity" and "accounting"[19] amounting to nearly two or three per cent of the total sale. Even from this amount he

deducts the interest due to him. After all these deductions he asks the Adivasi to do his yearly purchases from his shop instead of taking back the money. If the Adivasi still has some money coming to him, the *vanya* tries to convince the tribal to let the money remain deposited with the *vanya*, so that if he needs it in future it can be made available to him. The account for this amount is kept apart from the original *Khata*. Interest on the original loan keeps on accumulating unabated.

Chart 4: Working Year of the Adivasi Family

Period	Intensity of work	Main activities
End of September to end of October	Very heavy	Kharif harvesting carting of crops from the field to the stores Threshing Winnowing Rabi ploughing Rabi sowing Watering fields Storage work on Kharif crops People go to 'Parjia'
Beginning of November to middle of January	Heavy to just busy	Hay making and storage Vegetable growing and marketing Marketing of some Kharif crops Sindi extraction Some Mahuwa picking Watering and Watching fields A few people may go to parji

1	2	3
Second week of January to end of February	Heavy	Harvesting Rabi crops Winnowing Threshing Storage Marketing Mahuwa picking in full swing
First week of March to third week of March	Little work (Bhagoria festival and Holi)	Purchases for Bhagoria festival Repairing of drums, bows and arrows Mahuwa and Teemru picking Tari season begins Sindi season near its end
Middle of March to third week of June	Some work	Repairing of implements Construction and repairing of huts, wells, etc. Labouring for others Marriages and other ceremonies Visiting friends Collecting tari Rope making Visits to Bania for kind credits
Third week of June first week of July (rains)	Heavy	Ploughing, sowing of maize, Jowar and Groundnut Chawla, moong, urad
Middle of July to third week of August	Busy	Watching crops
End of August to third week of September	Heavy	Weeding and watching the crops

Notes and References:

1. I am grateful to Director, Agro-Economic Research Centre for allowing me the use of the quantitative data from my report G. S. Arora, *Socio-Economic Monograph of a Tribal Village-Bamanta.*

2. Students of tribal economics have found it extremely difficult to use special theoretical concepts developed by conventional economists. The fundamental problem is one of separating economic values from other values in simpler societies, where the overlap between the two is much greater than in the modern societies. Despite the difficulty it is possible to describe their material culture, production technology, labour organisation, systems of exchange and distribution. Since the Adivasis partially monetised I was able to make some quantitative assessments of their economic life.

3. R. Saxena, *Tribal Economy in Central India,* Calcutta, 1964, pp. 133–34.

   See also V. Elwin, *New Deal for Tribal India,* New Delhi, 1963, pp. 50–55.

4. A section of the non-Adivasi leaders at one time suggested that palm trees should be cut down because toddy brewed from the sap of these trees encouraged violence among the Adivasis. Adivasis almost reached a state of open revolt as a result of this policy in Gujarat a few years ago.

5. "In fairly favourable situations and in an on year, a 60 to 70 year old tree is often reported to yield over 10,000 fruits in many parts of South India", Singh, Krishnamurty and Katyal, *Fruit Culture in India,* Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, 1963, p. 101.

6. The social esteem accorded to a role within the family may not be due only to the role's contribution of labour to the family. The other factor namely the autonomy of a nuclear unit within a family is also important. An individual is accorded a full-fledged status only when he has been married.

7. This seems to be a widespread practice among simpler people. Cf. M. Nash, *Machine Age Maya,* Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1958.

   See also Margret Mead, *Growing Up in Samoa,* Penguin edition, London, 1959.

8. F. G. Bailey, *Caste and the Economic Frontier*, Oxford, Bombay, 1958.

9. Aurora, *op. cit.*, 1963.

10. Cf. Raymond Firth, "Themes in Economic Anthropology", A General Comment, in *Themes in Economic Anthropology*, ASA Monograph No. 6, Tavistode, London, 1967, pp. 17–20.

11. M. J. Herskowitz, *Economic Authropology*, New York, 1952. pp. 236–37.

12. Bamanta, a Socio–Economic Monograph of a Tribal Village (un-published).

13. Max Weber in Gerth and Mills (ed.) *From Max Weber*, Kegan Paul, 1961 edition, p. 181.

14. Tax's study-*Penny Capitalism*, makes interesting comparison with the Bhilalas. Among the Guatemalan Indian community studied by Tax–though differences in wealth were associated with differences in status, no firm systems of classes had developed among them. *Sol Tax Penny Capitalism: A Guatemalan Indian Economy*, Smithsonian Institute, Publication No. 16, Washington, 1953.

15. For general guidance on agriculture, I have selectively consulted the following books:

    Indian Council of Agricultural Research: *Handbook of Agriculture* (1967 edition), New Delhi, 1967.

    Kumar L.S.S. *et al*, *Agriculture in India,* Vol. I.

    I am grateful to my friend Mr. Arzhere (one time B.D.O. of Alirajpur) for instructing me on the agricultural technology and problems of the Adivasi.

16. Cf. V. Elwin, *New Deal for Tribal India*, New Delhi, 1963.

17. Cf. Aurora, 1963, *op. cit.*

18. C. Arsenberg, *The Irish Countryman*, New York, 1937.

19. R. Saxena, *op. cit.*

20. D. Forde, *Habitat, Economy and Society*, London, 1941.

CHAPTER VII

Extension of the Political Frontier

We have already shown that in the traditional tribal system before the deeper penetration of the Rajput authority amongst the tribals (1780s), the local clan seemed to be a very important unit of political activity. The regulation of conflicts and performance of religious and social ceremonies within a clan is still the responsibility of the clan elder's council headed by ths clan chief (*Mukhi*).[1] Again, in case of conflict between families of different clans, it is the local organisations of the clans which still confront each other. For example, in the case of kidnapping the aggrieved party – together with its allies and a *Bhanjgadia* (the mediator) – goes to the village of the aggressor party and demands recompense and their women to be restored. Often, the *Bhanjgadia* tries to argue for a reasonable settlement. In case the settlement does not come about between the two parties, a long drawn conflict may ensue. In the traditional system threat or actual use of force determined the balance of forces in a conflict. Conventionally, in case of conflict between two families of two clans, their maximal lineages or local clans were supposed to be involved, but in fact the local clan was affected only in the first few moves. Because of cross-cutting alliances all the minimal lineages other than the ones immediately affected, tended to disengage themselves from the dispute. Most commonly the dispute between the parties was and still is carried on in the form of nightly raids on the other parties' property and person.

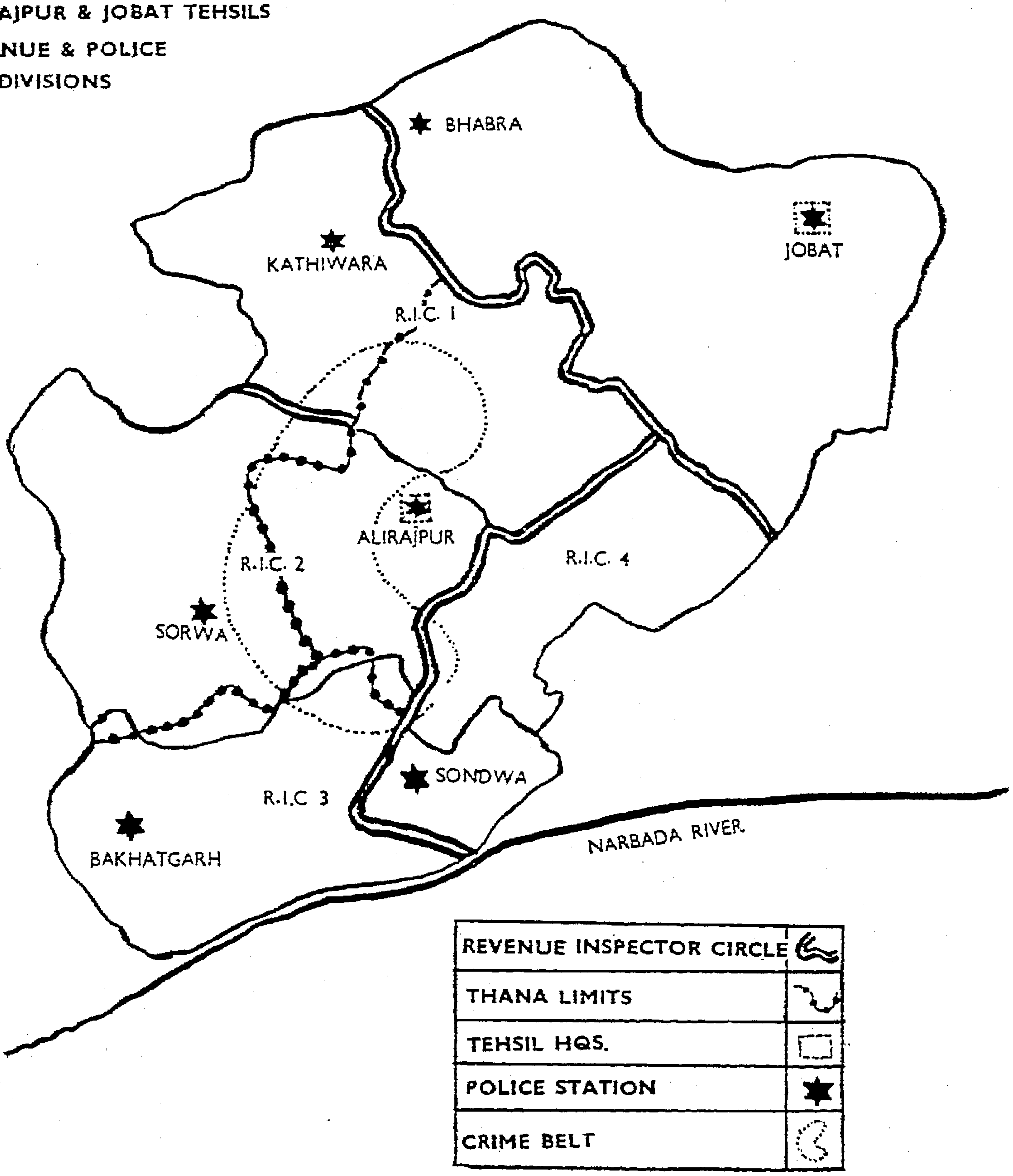
Once the political authority of the Rajputs began to penetrate the villages more effectively the clans did not remain as important in the local political set-up as they had been earlier. But in place of kinship loyalties, loyalties based on membership of a village community had grown stronger. These two kinds of

MAP 7

ALIRAJPUR SUB-DIVISION

ALIRAJPUR & JOBAT TEHSILS

REVENUE & POLICE SUB-DIVISIONS



competing loyalties sometimes appeared in dramatic forms. In a marriage at Rajawat there was a dispute between two persons over the bridegroom before the central ritual of the marriage. A Bhil from hamlet of Rajawat insisted that it was his privilege to give the pot full of water (*Vende*) to his friend whereas an agnate of the bridegroom from a neighbouring village insisted that the privilege ought to be his because he was his "brother". The dispute was saved by the Pujara who accepted both the pots for the ritual bath. Another indicator of the merger of the "clan" into the village is apparent from another important social fact. Each clan has a separate priest of its own for clan marriages. But the priest of the dominant clan of a village is also the priest of the village deities. Village deities are approached only through the priest of the dominant clan by people of all clans and *jatis*. Usually the dominant clan people are largest in number in a village, and own the largest share of the land. Often they are also believed to be the original settlers of the village.[2] In some cases where people have forgotten who the original dominant people were because of changes in the dominance pattern in the village, the priests of the village deities still belong to a lower *jati*.[3] Band village, for example, has a Bhil Pujara but a Bhilala Patel. Band village was a part of a *jagir* given to the Bhilala Patel of Richhvi village many generations ago "by the Durbar (court) of Gung Deo Roop Deo". One of the Bhil clans was the dominant clan of the village before the imposition of the office of Patel over the Bhil population of the village.

Much of the power and status of the Patel is maintained by the fact that he acts as a connecting link between the administrative system and the village system. This political position of the Patel is also reflected in some of the rituals. For example, the Patel has the important ritual function of putting on a *Safa* (turban) on the bridegroom. His presence is also essential at all the ceremonies where the village deities are propitiated.

II

We had mentioned that in the days of the Raja the inter-

mediate units of administration had been *Parganas* with *Kamasdars* as the officials-in-charge. The relations between these officials and the tribals followed roughly the same pattern as that between the Raja and his subjects. Harsh and autocratic rule combined with a degree of informality characterised the relations. It must, however, be remembered that the administrative machinery had relatively few duties and simpler commands to fulfil. The tribal disputes, for example, were very often concealed from the administration and even if they were brought to the notice of the lower level officials they were often settled by the officials outside the governmental channels, often after receiving bribes from both the disputing parties. The administration of justice, was, on the whole, inexpensive, though not necessarily unimpeachable. We were told that throughout the war years whereas the wages and prices went up steeply in the rest of India, the wages and the prices of staple commodities in the princely State went up only marginally. The prices of agricultural produce were kept down by the creation of numerous grain stores in the *Pargana* centres and other commercial villages. The tribals were asked to deposit their taxes in grains.[4] These were again sold during the scarcity seasons to needy people at lower prices. The local officials collected grains for themselves and for their horses and cattle from the tribals. As token payment tribals were given small coins. Officials considered "levies" of this kind as quite legitimate.

In August 1947, the princedom of Alirajpur was merged with Independent India as an integral constituent of the State (Pradesh) of Madhya Bharat. Alirajpur, together with the Rathodate of Kathiwara, formed the Tehsil (administrative division) of Alirajpur. District Jhabua was constituted in 1949 with Jhabua as the district headquarters and the erstwhile princedoms of Alirajpur, Jhabua and Jobat were merged in it. The princedoms now became, with minor adjustments, the Tehsils within the district, and the services of the local officials were incorporated in the Madhya Bharat Administaative Services. Almost the first administrative action of the new regime was to order a detailed survey for permanent settlement. After the

survey of land, which included a more rational classification of soils into a number of grades for purposes of taxation, the Adivasi farmers were issued deeds for the lands owned by them. Under the administration of the Raja the land revenue tended to vary from year to year, and was, on the whole, onerous for the peasants.

After the land survey, the number of officials in the revenue department was considerably increased. The *Kamasdars* who headed the *Pargana* administration were given posts of responsibility equivalent to *Naib* (Assistant) Tehsildars or Assistant Tehsil Officers. The Tehsil of Alirajpur was divided into a large number of Revenue Inspector (*Girdavar*) circles. Each of the *Girdavars*, also called a *Patwari*, was given responsibility of maintaining revenue and land records of four to five villages. Under the older system, the land of the village had vested basically in the dominant clan. When shifting cultivation was forbidden in the late nineteenth century, the village lands were parcelled out to families residing within the village. Thus, some of the families of the leading personalities within the local communities, such as the Mukhi, the Pujara and other lineage elders came to occupy large tracts of land. However, since land was not a scarce commodity, if a family of a relative was in need of land it was given without much hesitation. In fact, the attempt of the people was always to have allies live close to their own houses. After the survey it became increasingly risky to allow others to use one's land, and disputes over land became quite common. The new system of land records and revenue settlement was more systematic, impersonal and relatively less authoritarian than the older one. The new *Patwaris* were more closely in touch with the villagers than the *Patwaris* in the old set-up since the new *Patwaris* had lesser number of villages to manage. Land revenue was now lighter, but its collection became more regular and less prone to informal adjustment. The manipulation of land records by the *Patwaris*, as all over British India, became a source of corruption and power in the hands of the revenue officials.[6] But, at the same time, because the salaries of the revenue staff and their working conditions

improved considerably they could not make collections of grains as blatantly for personal use as they did before.

Patwaris, as before independence, function with the help of the Patels in the villages. The power of the Patels has therefore not undergone major changes and they remain even today by far the most powerful office within the village's political structure. According to some reports the Patels tended to behave as local Raja of the villages. It is said for example that Mal Singh, the old father of the present Patel Gulab Singh of Bamanta used to physically belabour people who tried to speak up to him. An ordinary villager could not approach him with shoes on. Gulab Singh's relations with his villagers are, surely, far from autocratic today. This may, to some extent, be due to the personality of the present Patel, but the real explanation lies in the weakening of the autocratic element in the administration. The king and his officials, though generally outside the tribal kinship system, were yet more easily incorporated into the political system of tribals. Earlier, mention had been made of the role of the Raja and the important Jagirdars of the Rajput royal family as arbitrators in inter-clan disputes. We learned that some of the popular *Patwaris* and *Gram Sevaks* were also sometimes asked to act in the same capacity. Earlier practically all the disputes between tribal famlies were resolved within the traditional system; a much larger number of these disputes tend, today, to find their way into the judicial courts. The existence of an authority outside the traditional system certainly encourages people who have lost their cases with the *ad hoc* courts of the mediators (*Bhajgadia*) to appeal to the official courts for redress. This, in turn, has brought a large number of people in touch with the advocates in the towns and the expensive judicial machinery of the present regime.

III

There are, at present, the following departments of the government with their representatives either located at the village-level or constantly touring the villages.

i) **The revenue department:** *Patwari*, the village record-keeper and revenue collector, has to look after the records of about four to five villages. He spends about one week in a month in these villages, otherwise, he is normally available to the farmers at his residence in one of the commercial villages in or near his circle.

ii) **The police department:** The Tehsil has a number of police stations (Thanas). The area covered by a police station does not necessarily limit to the area within a Tehsil. The district of Jhabua is divided into a number of sub-divisions, such as, Thandla, Alirajpur and Jhabua. Alirajpur sub-division constists of the tehsils of Jobat and Alirajpur. Within Alirajpur sub-division there are seven police stations, out of which four police stations cover most of the area within the Tehsil of Alirajpur. Besides the *Thana* (police station) there are also sub-police stations located at many of the main market centres.

iii) **The Tribal Welfare Department:** has a wide network of hostel-schools (*Chatravas*) for the Adivasi children. These schools are often centres of other activities as well, e.g., veterinary and health centres and of forest labour co-operative societies and Adivasi Producers Co-operative Societies. A large number of functionaries of the welfare projects are continuously in touch with the villagers.

iv) **Health Department:** too is represented at the primary health centres by a number of functionaries, such as compounders, nurses, nurse-midwives, family planning workers. Besides there are permanently stationed officials. There are also project teams such as malaria and cholera eradication workers.

v) **Agriculture Department:** besides functioning through the block machinery, it fields a number of project teams to propagate innoculations against rinderpest or for castration of bulls, etc.

vi) Education Department : is represented by middle schools at the commercial villages and primary schools at a large number of tribal villages. These village schools are mostly single-teacher schools.

vii) The most effective and widespead agency of directed change, are, of course, the block people.

IV

The Adivasis classify the government servants that visit their villages, by their mode of travelling. First, there are the people who travel by jeeps. In the villages close to the roads, the Adivasis have come to understand the distinction between the different kinds of officials. The revenue and the police officials are, of course very well-known for their officiousness and power. When *Dipty Baba* (Deputy Collector) comes to a village, the *Patwaris* of a whole Revenue Inspectors circle (RI circle) come to attend on him. He may also bring with him a Tehsildar or a Block Development Officer (B.D.O.). Usually chicken will be served to the guests. Some local *Patwari*, who is usually an Asada Rajput or Kayasth from Uttar Pradesh, or a Bhilala Peon, with sufficient experience of cooking meat and *Panya* (roasted, unleavened and saltish maize flour cakes made on burning cow-dung), sets up a kitchen. Occasionally one of the *Patwaris* or Village Level Worker (VLW) goes to Alirajpur on a bicycle to get *Shri Khand* (a sweet dish prepared from curd) for the guests. A substantial contribution for the feast comes from those whose cases (usually about division of land) are being decided by the *Dipty Baba*.

When policemen come to the village, the first reaction of the villagers is to run away. Of course, the Patel and the Kotwal are exceptions. I record below one such scene from my field diary. "Dur Singh saw a number of constrables coming in the direction of Patel *Phalya* (hamlet). *Dagre avse re,* he said (the policemen are on their way). Most men from their homes fled to their fields. But the Patel ran in the other direction. Quickly tying a sheet of cloth around his loins, he

approached them. "Ram Ram, head Sahib", he said. How did you happen to come this way? 'Patel, go and bring some water for us to drink', was their first order. While Patel went away finding water for the visitors a few *Charpois* were put in the shade of the house by the women. Soon Rumania Kotwal also came. One of the constables was carrying a chicken tied up in a bag. Soon the Patel came back with a jar of toddy. 'Oe', we had asked you for water', the constable said looking towards me. Give this to 'Baba', indicating me with his hand. 'You have, he will also have', said the Patel."

Once a police inspector came with his whole family to Bamanta for a picnic. The Patel and the Kotwal served them all the time they were there. When the Patel pays attention to the police or revenue officials, he is dressed in his *Muslin Dhoti*, city style shirt and a turban. His expression, however, is usually serious and tense while the officials are around. Patel's and the lower level government servants' behaviour on these occasions provides a contrast between those who are subordinate members of the urban dominated power system (such as Patwaris, VLWs, police constables) and the rural elements who are its marginal members (Patels and Kotwals.)

The police and the forest constables and the revenue officials are more often true to a certain stereotype. Their relationship with the tribal is characterised by one-sided demands—for information, obedience, taxes, graft – backed by the fear of punishment. This kind of relationship breeds a hard, demanding, inconsiderate role. No wonder the term used for the policemen is *Dagre*, which literally means stones. When the tribals meet the development or welfare officials, they meet people of a very different ilk. Since a B.D.O. also travels by jeep he evokes a mixed type of response, of welcome, mixed with a bit of apprehension. There are however many extesion officers who become welcome guests in the village. Let me record another extract from my field diary to illustrate this. The people of the hamlet enjoyed the visit of the agricultural extension officer. He swore at them and laughed with them and jokingly wore all their jewels

and the *Safa*. Men, women and children all got around him. Before he went he asked the Patel to take the responsibility of distributing chemical fertilisers in the village and promised to try and get a loan for Bhurla who had requested the Patel to get him a loan. At night the V.L.W. held a meeting in Patel's house where the elders from all the hamlets had come together. The V.L.W. explained that this year again they would have to use fertiliser, but he pleaded to try it for maize as well as for chillies. He promised that if they followed the instructions, the maize crop will also be as good as the chilli crop.

Besides the extension personnel there are other kinds of developmental officers like the ones recorded in the following quotation. "A team of the geological survey came to Bamanta. They were exploring the mineral resources of the area. Patel was asked by the V.L.W. to help these people. They pitched their tents near his house so that they could have an easy access to water from his well. Rumania Kotwal and Dur Singh were looking after the visitors for two days. The geologist was a very friendly person. In the evening he called Gulab Singh to his tent and asked if he would like to have a drink with him. They all sat together and chatted. Of course, the V.L.W. had to act as an interpreter to Gulab Singh. When the geologist opened a tin of cheese Gulab Singh saw it with wonder and asked if he could keep the tin for his use."

Not all the developmental officials are as well liked as the geologist. Some of them speak in the language of assumed superiority and thus generate both a sense of inferiority among the tribals as well as a feeling of resentment. "The malaria team came to Bamanta and wanted to take blood samples of the Bhilalas. The children were brought together by the school master. They came not knowing what was up. The malaria worker tried to explain to some of the men who had also gathered. 'The needle will cure you of fever' he said. Soon as the children heard that they were to be pricked all of them ran away. The worker was dejected. Meanwhile, Jwan Singh brought toddy from atop a tree. 'They are all *Gàndes*', one of

them said. 'Ho' replied Jwan Singh, 'Government is spending so much money for your benefit, it is all a waste'. 'We are *Gande*', replied Jwan Singh, 'Hey! Why don't you wear something over your buttocks, don't you feel shy'. 'We, *Gande Manus,* do not look well in *vanya's Dhoti,* they are too delicate for our use'. Jwan said this tying his cloak round his waist.

V

It is said that the Raja knew the names of all the Patels, *Tadwis* and *Mukhis* in his State. Anyone in trouble could approach him directly and place his problem before him. The informality and ready justice embedded in "personalism" had its unsavoury aspects as well. An informant, an old Sunar of Alirajpur told me: "The Raja had ordered that everyone must wear a headgear while in the bazar or shop. One day the Raja passed my shop and found me without a headgear. Within half an hour I was called to the palace where I was immediately given a sharp slap on the face. I was so terrified that I urinated in my pants." The Raja tended to be autocratic and capricious if his "mood" was not right.[6] It is true that the British had introduced reforms in the State's administrative and judicial set-up. But the traditional forces had continued to keep in check the influence of the modernistic elements in the State's administrative and judicial spheres. The post-independence regime attempted to replace the "personalism" of the olden days by impersonalism and democracy.

The impersonality of the new regime was, in fact, embedded in the administrative set of rules and traditions handed down by the British to their Indian colleagues in the administrative services of British India. These traditions were, after independence, largely kept intact by the popular leaders. The authority, in the new popular rule, was vested in the legislative assemblies in every State of the Indian Union. British Indian provinces had, even before independence, popularly elected assemblies, which, in the new situation, became the ultimate authority over the executive branches of the State apparatus in each newly constituted *Pradesha* (State). In India, therefore, there was a

degree of continuity between the British and the national regimes. As compared to the British, who had reluctantly instituted partially popular institutions in British India, the native princes were averse to the democratic aspirations of their subjects. Alirajpur's ruler was no exception to this general rule; here too, the Raja discouraged the people from organising any kind of political or occupational associations. A strict watch was kept over any person who came into the State from outside. If he happened to show any political interest, he was immediately made to leave the State. We have already mentioned that Alirajpur has had, since at least the late eighteenth century, close commercial relations with Dohad. It was through Dohad that nationalistic ideas percolated into Alirajpur.

There was a rather better organised State Peoples' Conference *(Desi Lok Parishad)* in Indore, which also influenced some of the younger residents of Alirajpur town. The influence of the nationalistic movement was confined to the young people from among the commercial castes. In 1942, when the whole of British India was rocked by the struggle of the nationalists, only a few of the individuals in Alirajpur town knew about it; the tribals were not even remotely aware of the national movement. It was only after independence that a *Lok Parishad* was established in Alirajpur, largely under the influence of a nationalist leader, Basant Rao of Indore. A small number among the professional groups, such as teachers and advocates, played a prominent role in the newly established nationalist organisation. But soon the organisation tended to be dominated by the professional politicians from commercial castes with persons from the "oil miller" (Rathore) caste playing a leading role within it. Rathores have maintained their hegemony over the organisation even till today.

VI

The first Legislative Council of Madhya Bharat was largely a nominated assembly. Since a large number of princely States in Madhya Bharat had no representative institutions, the first popular ministry in the newly created State was nominated

by the Congress government at the centre. The constitution had not yet been finalised and until that was done the State's executive was assisted by a nominated State legislature. Under these circumstances Mool Chand Vanya, an advocate of Alirajpur, was chosen to represent Alirajpur State. By the general elections of 1952, Alirajpur Desi Lok Parishad had been converted into the Tehsil branch of the Congress Party and it had established a number of links with the traditional leaders of the Adivasi castes, such as Bhilala Jagirdars and Patels and Bhil Tadwis. During the general elections in 1952, the Congress Party put up an Adivasi Bhilala Patel as its candidate from Alirajpur reserved constituency. The Congress Party lost the first elections to a Socialist Party candidate. A number of factors were attributed to the unexpected result. The Socialist Party of India had no local workers in Alirajpur. Its candidate, Bhimaji Patel, belonged to Bhabra. But the Party was supported by a number of Adivasis who had heard of the Socialist leader of the tribals, Mama Baleshwar of Bamania. Their success can be attributed first of all to the fact that they contacted on foot every tribal village and taught the people how to vote. They also promised them many things which they could never have fulfilled, for example, free wood from the forest. But their success was largely due to the fact that the Congress leaders of the town were just not interested in the elections since they were themselves not able to stand for the Scheduled Tribes reserved seats. Again, the feudal elements put up an influential Patel — Bheru Singh of Sej Gaon on Ram Rajya Parishad's ticket. He was able to divide a large number of votes controlled by the Patels that would normally have gone to the Congress candidate—Chhatar Singh — Patel of Kodboo.

VII

By 1956, the Congress Party in the Tehsil had been fully identified with the interests of the traders of Alirajpur town and the commercial villages. But during the elections held that year its candidate won. Its victory was particularly impressive in those areas where the economic conditions had improved due to the efforts of the Block Development Authorities. In fact, the

B.D.O.s' Extension Officers and the Village Level Workers were proving to be a strong political force. Even if they did not take active part in politics their mode of working could certainly influence people's opinion about the *Congress raj.* Another reason for the Socialist failure in 1957 was the reaction of the tribals who had expected to get wood free from forests after the victory of their Socialist candidate, but who had instead to pay fines for poaching. By this time the original mistrust between the former feudal elements such as Jagirdars and the Indian princes, and the Congress workers had given place to a better understanding and closer co-operation. (One of the important workers of the Tehsil Congress told me that just after the merger of the State with Madhya Bharat, a section of the royal family was actively co-operating with certain Hindu revivalist elements and trying to upset the communal harmony in the State and thus nullify the Congress leader's efforts to stabilise the new administration. In the first elections (1952), the candidate of the Ram Rajya Parishad parly had the very active support from this section of the 'royal house').

The elections of 1962 are important in so far as they led to the return of the Socialist candidate to the legislature from Jhabua District. In Alirajpur an active Socialist worker, Bhagirat Bhanwar, was able to trounce Chhatar Singh, the sitting Congress Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Pradesh. Socialist victory in these elections was not only due to the popularity of the Socialist candidate among the Adivasis and his reputation as a sincere defender of the Adivasi's rights but also due to the fact that the Congress M.L.A., in contrast to the Socialist candidate, had remained a political non-entity in the Congress Party. Had he been able to utilise his official position to transform the Congress Party from an urban dominated group to a mass party in which the Adivasi's numerical superiority in the district was reflected, the situation would have been different. The same situation, more or less, prevails even today.

I observed the elections of 1962 and 1967. In both these elections some of the candidates used money, liquor and official

pressure to sway the voters. But the percentage of votes swayed by such means was probably quite small. One of the candidates hired a large number of people to act as his processionists. He also distributed liquor in the Bhil and Balahi hamlets to get votes. Congress party has been consistently supported by a large section of the rich Patels and Jagirdars, and the village level officials. The socialists have also depended on the loyalty of a number of Patels, but the strength of the socialists has often been derived from the younger educated elements of the tribal population.

Within the context of the politics in the Tehsil we find that the image of the local unit of the Congress Party and the general image of the *Congress raj* remain discrete. The general isolation of the local Congress leaders from the bulk of the Adivasi masses and their total dependence on the traditional leadership institutions for political support tends to handicap them as a political force among the Adivasis. These politico-commercial leaders are, however, a part of the larger Congress system[7] which is, jurally at least, the dominant elements in the political system; they cannot, therefore, be entirely ignored in distributing the spoils of the system. The "spoils" are distribution of quotas for the retailing of such items as sugar, steel, corrugated iron sheets, ration wheat and maize and issuing of permits for the export and import of various items listed above and dried Mahuwa flowers. Beside these the contracts for P. W. D. constructions, such as roads, buildings, dams, etc, are also a possible source of corruption. The administration also has large sums of money at its disposal particularly for the "social" and economic improvement of the tribal folk. Since the Congress Party as an organisation does not function in the tribal "interior" it is used and manoeuvred mainly by the commercial castes and only secondarily by the rural elite, like the *Sarpanches* (Presidents of the Panchayat Samitis) in the village. The *Sarpanchas* are mostly traditional leaders and are often aligned with rightist political parties, such as Swatantra or Ram Rajya Parishad. Here a comparison of the situation with that of the non-Brahmins in Madras would be enlightening. Brahmins not only dominated

the educational and administrative fields before independence, but were also a dominant group in the political system. After the independence the more numerous Adi-Dravida peasant castes were able to oust the Brahmins from political power by capturing the Congress Party. This contrasts with the situation in Alirajpur where the Adivasi elite is unable to dislodge the commercial castes dominating the Congress Party. The appeal of the rightist parties is not so much because of a conscious understanding and agreement with their ideologies but rather on account of the loyalty for some of the Rajput "princess" who are its leaders.

VIII

We often think of the traditional element as the one which is conservative in its outlook. The leaders of this element are usually considered arch-reactionary in ideas and practices. This is quite true if we limit our definition of conservatism to its power dimension. The traditional leaders are on the whole chary of basic changes in the structure of power relations in their society, but they are most often as a class, neutral or even eager to make changes in their productive technology provided it is not likely to affect the pattern of class relations within their society. In Alirajpur, the leading tribal families belonging to bigger Patels and Jagirdars are relatively better educated, more urbanised, more politically conscious and on the whole more progressive in adopting the improved techniques of farming. As we have already shown that even in Bamanta the better off Bhilala farmers, particularly of the Patel family, are better able to take advantage of opportunities presented by the Block and Panchayati Raj institutions.

Below we give a short description of the seven most influential tribal leaders in Alirajpur with their political affiliations, educational qualifications and membership of some of the popular and developmental institutions:

i) Bheru Singh Patel (Sej Gaon): He is the ex-Jagirdar of the village and was also Bara Gao'n Patel (Patel of twelve villages). He was a candidate for the State Assembly in 1952.

He is President of Sej Gaon Panchayat Samiti (Committee); and a member of some of the advisory bodies of the Block. His farm is run on relatively modern lines. He has a diesel motor tube-well to irrigate his fields. He is a prodigious consumer of block-distributed chemical fertilisers, pesticides and improved seeds. He has donated land and money to get a medical dispensary, a primary school and primary health centre opened in his hamlet. He was educated up to VII class at the Government School, Alirajpur.

ii) Bhan Singh Patel of Khandala : He is the *sarpanch* of Khandala Panchayat; President of the Multipurpose Co-operative Society, a member of the Congress Party. He has passed his middle school from the Government School, Alirajpur. The V. L. W. of his circle described him as a rich and progressive farmer.

iii) Chhatar Singh, Patel of Kodboo: Sarpanch of Kodboo Panchayat, President of the Marketing Co-operative Society, President of the Nayai Panchayat (Panchayat Court). He is an ex-Member of the State Legislative Assembly. He is a matriculate. Chhatar Singh is known to be a progressive farmer.

iv) Dhule Singh Jagirdar of Ambva : He is the Sarpanch of Ambva. In some quarters he was mentioned as a prospective candidate for the membership of the Legislative Assembly. One of the richest Jagirdars in Alirajpur. He is educated up to Class VI.

v) Rodha, son of Vesta Patel of Kanpur : He is a Sarpanch of the Panchayat Samiti of Kanpur. His sons are getting educated at Indore in a degree college. He is known to be the best farmer in his area. He is also literate.

vi) Inder Singh Patel of Ram Singh ki Choki: He is a *Sarpanch*, a member of the Multipurpose Co-operative Society, and a member of the Congress Party. He is literate.

vii) Bheru Singh, Sarpanch of Ambari: He is a rich Patel of his area. He was supported by the Swatantra Party in

one election, but in the next election he switched over his loyalty to the Socialist Party. He is widely travelled and had his education at Bombay. He is an intelligent and progressive farmer in his area.

The role of Bhilala Jagirdars and big Patels and Bhil Tadwis was one of "bridge elements" between the Rajput ruling family and mass of the tribals. As we have already shown the commercial castes and the Rajput aristocracy were both parts of the urban sub-system which formed the locus of economic and political power in the total social system of Alirajpur. As "bridge elements" they acquired some of the characteristics which made them marginal members (in the cultural sense) of both the urban and the rural social systems. The parenthetic remark in the preceding sentence—"in the cultural sense"—requires further explanation. Bhilala Jagirdars and larger Patels are the loci of power in their own rural surroundings. The structural distance between them and the mass of Adivasis is often sought to be emphasised by distinctive cultural traits, such as knowledge of Hindi and of reading and writing, urban modes of dressing, adoption of Sanskritic ritual, construction of brick buildings *(Haveli)*, etc. All these culture traits were originally borrowed from the local agents of the wider Hindu civilization, such as the commercial castes and the ruling Rajput family. But, as we saw in Chapter II, in the very process of borrowing, certain distinctive tribal adaptations are introduced so that culturally these people remain marginal both to the tribal and the town's cultural systems. Structurally, however, their position is central to the local social system but peripheral to the regional locus of power.

IX

The Socialist Party was started in 1950 in the Tehsil three years after the merger of the State in independent India. Bhagirat Bhanwar, a Bhilala full-time worker of the Party, came from district Ratlam, where he was trained as a Gandhian socialist in the *Ashram* (hermitage) of a political and social worker, Mama Baleshwar Dayal, of Bamania. Baleshwar Dayal was well-known in the district as a devoted social worker and a

Gandhian. Bhagirat Bhanwar started working in Alirajpur together with another worker of the Socialist Party, Shri Bhimaji of Bhabra. Bhagirat Bhanwar's first contacts in Alirajpur were with Malis, one of whom, Shri Mangal, provided him with some accommodation in his house. During the early summers of 1951–52 famine conditions were developing in the countryside of Alirajpur and the two socialist workers took active part in organising a *Sahavata Samiti* (assistance committee) to help the starving tribals. In 1952 elections Bhagirat Bhanwar worked for Bhimaji of Bhabra who had been put up by the Socialist Party of India as its candidate from that assembly constituency. This was his first large-scale contact with the tribal masses in the district and this helped him to establish useful contacts with the tribals of Alirajpur. In 1957, Bhagirat Bhanwar stood for elections to the State assembly and was the chief contender of the successful Congress candidate who won that year. But by the following election in 1961, he again contested and was elected by a clear-cut majority over his Congress rival, Chhatar Singh.

Right from the start his main political efforts were directed towards organising campaigns against some of the *Sahukars* and Rajput Jagirdars who took forced unpaid labour (*Begar*) from the tribals during the busy seasons. He particularly recalls some of the campaigns against a very cruel *Sahukar* (usurer) "who tied a tribal debtor to his jeep by a rope and made him run behind it for many miles". He said: "the tribals were unaware that the new administration would be more sympathetic to their legitimate demands than the Rajput princes; but since the Congress Party was dominated by capitalists the Congress leaders were doing nothing to awaken the tribals. We organised demonstrations at the Collector's house and very soon the adminstration intervened to stop *Begar*". Other campaigns of the Party included those against corruption in the forest, soil conservation, police and land revenue departments.

It is interesting to note that some of the most active socialist members were drawn from among those tribal young men who had gone to Government-run hostel schools. (*Chhat-*

travas). The socialists came to be recognised by their blue shorts, while shirt and red cap in the sub-division of Alirajpur; blue shorts and white shirt were also the official uniform of the pupils of Government-run hospital schools. By and large, the political invective of the Socialist leaders was directed against the allegedly corrupt administration and "blood sucking" commercial elements. This campaign, attracted the lower ranks of the traditional tribal leaders, many of whom felt much more sympathetic to the protest movement. In the elections held in 1962, Bhagirat Bhanwar was elected the representative of the Alirajpur reserved tribal constituency of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly. This office, in its turn, brought him into the various advisory bodies appointed by the sub-divisional officer of the Collector of Jhabua district. As an elected representative of the tribals his opinion began to carry weight with the local officials and thus he was drawn closer to the focus of power in the Tehsil.

Earlier we mentioned that Bhagirat Bhanwar stood for elections in the 1957 General Elections for the Legislative Assembly Reserved Tribal seat and lost to the Congress candidate, Chhattar Singh Patel of Kodboo, by a margin of about 2,000 votes. In that election, he (Bhagirat) got almost a negligible number of votes from the commercial castes. Telling me about the successive performance of the Socialist Party candidates in the three General Elections since independence, Bhagirat gave me the following figures:

1952 — (Bhimji) secured 7 votes from Alirajpur town.

1957 — (Bhagirat Bhanwar) secured nearly 350 votes from Alirajpur town. These were of Koli, Bhilala, Kumhar (Potter) and Mali castes.

1962 — (Bhagirat Bhanwar) secured nearly 570 votes primarily from the above noted castes but this time his votes also came from some of the supporters from the commercial castes.

1967 — Bhagirat Bhanwar's voting increased in Alirajpur town to over 850.

In the Alirajpur town's municipal election held in 1959, Bhagirat Bhanwar got elected to the municipal committee from Baharpura ward. This meant that even for a substantial number of commercial caste people, the Socialist Party and its leader was becoming a counter point against the dominant leadership of the Congress Party in the town. By 1964 the Socialist Party had a membership of 125 in Alirajpur town alone and in the Tehsil the membership exceeded 500. An interesting feature of the Socialist leader's enhanced status is that he was often supported by a minority within the Congress and elected to positions of prestige, such as the Presidentship of the Housing Co-operative Society on the plea that as an M.L.A. he had an easy access to officials and his travelling to Indore from Alirajpur could be done on his free railway pass; besides, it was said that unlike the leaders of the Congress he was more obliging. As one of his supporters told me: "Bhagirat is a Bhilala and does not have the pretensions that come naturally of the Congress leaders of the higher castes". In 1957, Bhagirat Bhanwar built a house of his own in Baharpura ward of Alirajpur town in one of the fringe streets. Though rooted on the fringe of the town and town's society, Bhagirat's inclusion in the town as a stable citizen was an event of significance. As an important channel of political power of the tribal hinterland his location in the town meant that to some extent the commercial caste citizenary could also draw upon that source. That is precisely why in establishing his house he got liberal support from a number of rich citizens of Alirajpur town.

Chart 5: Prestige and Power Hierarchies
Governmental

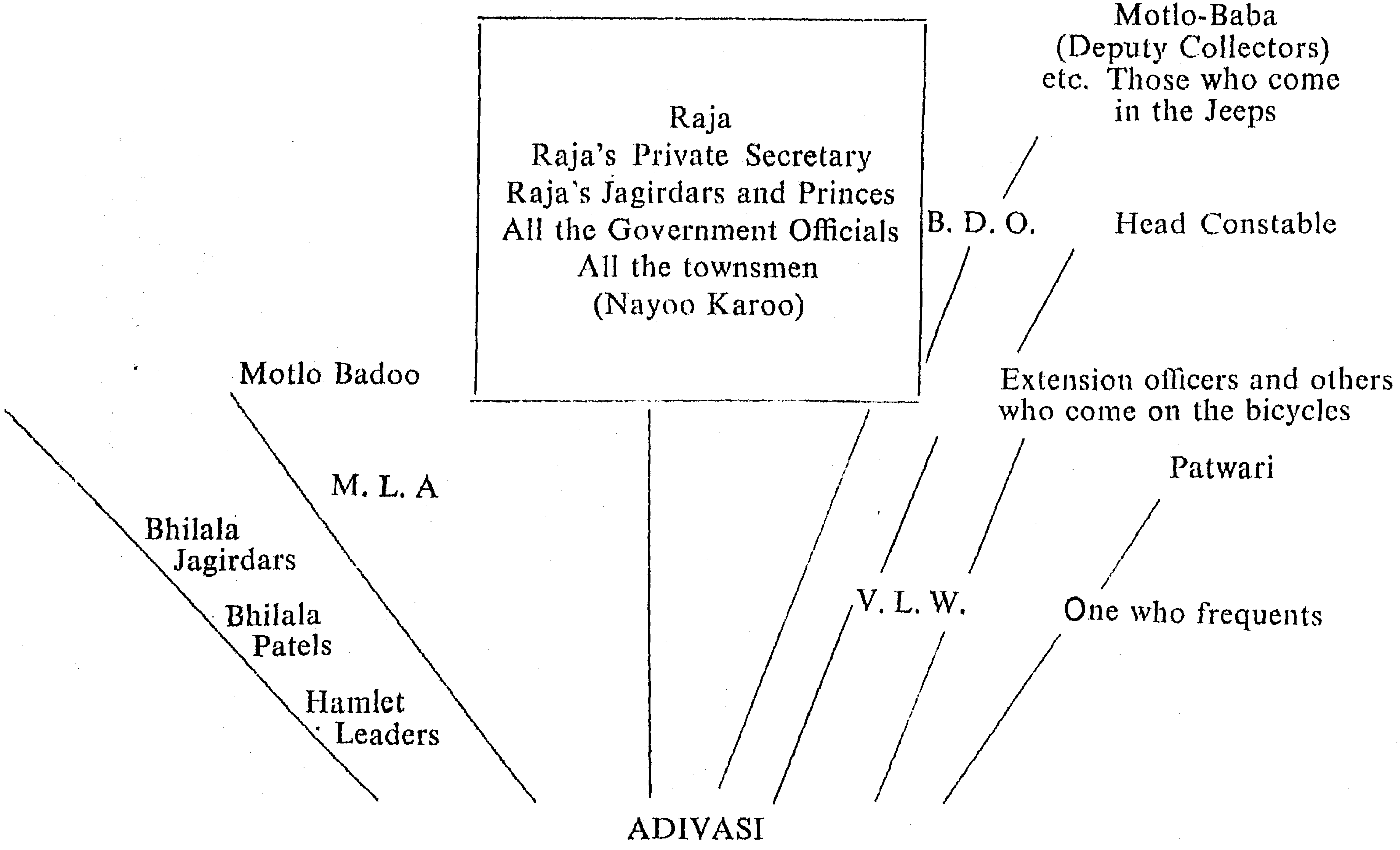
Levels	Administrative	Democratic	Developmental
Regional	Deputy Collector i) Tehsildar ii) Superintendent of Police iii) Forest Officer iv) Other Sub-Division Officers	i) M. L. A. ii) *Kendriya Panchayat Pradhan* iii) Mayor of town of Alirajpur iv) President of the Market	Deputy Collector i) B. D. O. ii) Extension Officer iii) M. L. A. (Ex-Officio member of the Development Council iv) Other members of D. C.
Sub-regional	i) Head Constable ii) Patwari iii) Other touring officers of subordinate categories	i) President of village Panchayats ii) Presidents of Nayai Panchayats iii) Members of various committees formed by the developmental Organisations	i) V. L. W. ii) Secretary, Co-operative Society iii) Headmasters
Village	i) Patel ii) Kotwal	i) Panchayat member	School Teacher

Social

Levels	Feudal	Emergent	Tribal	Urban
Regional	Raja i) Rajput Princes ii) Raja's entourage	i) President of the Tehsil Congress ii) President of the Socialist Party (M. L. A)		i) Mayor of Alirajpur town ii) Congress Leaders iii) Urban caste Leaders iv) Industrialists v) Rich traders
Sub-regional	i) Jagirdars ii) Bara Gaon Patel	i) Political activists ii) Rich and Progressive farmers iii) Office bearers of various associations	i) Bara Gao'n Patel ii) Bhilala Jagirdars iii) Bhil & Bhilala Mukhis iv) Bhil & Bhilala robbers v) Important Badwas	i) President of Commercial Village Panchayats ii) Rich Sahukars with large number of tribal clients iii) Transporters

Levels	Feudal	Emergent	Tribal	Urban
Village	i) Patels (Bhilala) ii) Bhil Tadwis iii) Hamlet Headmen	i) Member Panchayat ii) Educated tribal iii) Progressive farmer	i) Mukhi ii) Patel iii) Pujara iv) Badwa v) Hamlet leaders	i) Permanent shopkeepers in Hat Bazar villages.

Chart 6 : As the Tribal Views Hierarchies of Prestige and Power



Notes and References

General Comment : The term "political" is not understood here in institutional terms. In other words, in the term political we include not only behaviour and thought related to State and its constituent institutions, but aspects of governance and authority—in whichever institution they may appear. Of course, the clearest locus of governance and authority is most clearly the State. Cf. J. A. Barns, "Politics without Parties", *Man* LIX, 13-15, London 1959.

1. It would be more appropriate to translate *Mukhi* as the "spokesman" rather than a "chief". *Mukhi's* is not an authoritarian role in the Bhilala's traditional system. But when some *Mukhis* were made Patels-as representatives of an authoritarian system of administration they sometimes tended to adopt an authoritarian attitude to their people.

   Cf. M. Carstairs : "Bhill Villages of Western Udaipur" in M. N. Srinivas (Ed.), *op. cit.*, 1955, pp. 68-76.

2. Evans-Pritchard uses dominant clan to mean those clans who have a prior claim over the hamlet lands, and the hamlet is known by their name. Cf. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, Oxford, 1940, pp. 139-91.

3. Dr K. M. Bhowrasker told me that in some of the Gond Villages of Madhya Pradesh the shamans and priests of the earth deities are Baigas or are called Baigas, a tribe which resided before the Gonds drove them into Mandla district.

4. Land revenue varied from Rs. 8 per acre to Rs. 19 per acre. Cf. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. V, Clarendon, Oxford, 1908, p. 125.

5. About Patwaris the wisers have very bitter comments. Cf. C. and W. Wiser. *Behind Mud Walls*, Berkely, 1963.

6. Cf. M. Carstairs, "A Village in Rajasthan" in M. N. Srinivas (Ed.) *India's Villages*, Bombay, 1955, pp. 36-41.

7. Cf. A. P. Barnabbas and S. C. Mehta, *Caste in Changing India*, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1965, Ch. VIII & IX.

CHAPTER VIII

Extension of the Economic Frontier

It is difficult to say what the tribal system may have been before the arrival of the Rajputs, but from whatever ethnographic evidence that is available, it is clear that at least one of the significant effects of the Rajput penetration of the tribal hinterland was the introduction of a much larger number of commercial castes in the region than were present before. Even before Rajput power penetrated the tribal hinterland there was already one semi-tribal itinerant trading *jati* in contact with the tribal people. They were the Banjaras[1] who penetrated the tribal settlements in the forests and inland valleys and traded some of the commodities which the Adivasis had learnt to use since times immemorial. These commodities were, mainly, salt and condiments and iron agricultural implements of various kinds. They also supplied them with iron arrow heads (*Veel*). In return for these commodities, the Banjaras got forest produce, such as honey, lac, Charoli seeds, etc. It is quite possible that cloth too was first introduced into their society through the Banjaras. One large lineage of Banjaras (Vaghela) and some of its junior allies settled in Malvai, a village near Alirajpur. They took to farming and introduced plough cultivation and maize growing. Today Banjaras are known as the Asada Rajputs and they resent being referred to as Banjaras. The Asadas speak Gujarati at home, though some of the informants told me that their parents knew another language as well. One of the educated and knowledgeable informants told me that this language was very much like the Bundhel Khandi dialect of Hindi.

It is believed that Sir Gaud Vanyas of Nanpur had been in that village much before the establishment of the town of Alirajpur, and from all evidence it is certain that Alirajpur town was itself built by the village of Gdat only in the late eighteenth

century by Musafir Makrani whom we have already mentioned earlier (Chapter II). Besides Alirajpur, which is today a small town of nearly 12,000, there are a number of commercial villages spread all over the Tehsil. The local tradition as well as the more recent pattern of the growth of these villages indicates the possible manner in which these must have grown. At most of these villages the weekly markets were held. They were used by the Adivasis to barter their produce for cloth, salt, iron implements and copper ornaments. Adivasis could also barter with each other at these markets. Some of the Adivasi castes, such as Balais and Mankars had also specialised in producing cloth and a kind of crude pottery. These commodities were exchanged for grains, dried Mahuwa flowers and other agricultural produce brought to the *Hats* by the Bhils and Bhilala farmers. Salt was usually sold by the Banjaras to the tribal buyers. The villages where these *Hats* were held were protected directly by the Rajput or Bhilala Jagirdars so that they served as a kind of neutral ground where Adivasi clans opposed to each other could get together and do the trading. As we have already mentioned these *Hats* served an additional important function of providing a convenient place where affines could expect to hear about their parental families from visitors from their parental villages. Again, it is largely at these markets that love affairs could develop between young visitors of different villages and clans. The *Hats* facilitated communication between the Adivasi kinship networks.

The places where *Hats* were held gradually came to have regular shops of immigrant commercial castes and ultimately their residences as well. The process was somewhat like what happens even today. At first, an immigrant trader finds that by establishing a shop in one such *Hat*-village (during the Mahuwa collecting season) he can purchase a larger quantity because he can contact the surrounding villages throughout the week instead of waiting for them to come to him on one day in the week. Gradually this shopkeeper expands his business to other commodities and also starts lending money and thus comes to spend the whole of the year in the same village. It is possible that noting

his success other businessmen also join him. Probably they are further encouraged also by the local Jagirdar. In the olden days the encouragement to settle down may have come from the Raja who used thriving commercial centres for locating police stations and forest rangers. Today almost one out of ten villages in the Tehsil has at least some people of commercial castes.

II

Earlier we have discussed the degrees of dependence of the Adivasi on the urban centres. Here let us briefly go over the consequences of this dependence on the urban social system on the one hand, and the traditional rural system, on the other. We saw that the urban *Hat Bazar* of today with permanent shops of the commercial caste people grew out of an institution where primitive exchange transactions and cultural interaction could go on between various Adivasi and non-Adivasi elements under the relatively neutral protection of the Rajput rulers. We found that the immigrant commercial castes were able to completely "capture" and transform these institutions, that is, the *Hat Bazars*. These commercial castes had a better grasp of the monetary institutions than the tribals. In the process of channelling the resources of the tribal hinterland to the higher foci of economic wealth and *vice versa* they were able to extract considerably large profits for themselves.

It is well-known that the Adivasi, under the rule of the Rajput leaders, gradually changed from shifting cultivation to settled cultivation of maize and other cereal crops. With the commercial castes came the production of til oilseeds as a commercial crop, which was later followeed by groundnuts. Today, with the intimate involvement of the State machinery in the productive organisation the Adivasi has also begun to market vegetables and papaya fruits. How has an increased economic potential affected the structure of the Adivasi social system? We have mentioned earlier that even today the bulk of the Adivasi society is not markedly differentiated on the basis of different styles of life but a socio-cultural elite is fast developing. One can conjecture with a fair degree of certainty that in

earlier periods changes in the styles of life did not follow differences in wealth within a tribal community. Increased monetisation of the Adivasi economy has certainly encouraged the economically wealthier sections to express this difference by conspicious spending on clothes and ceremonies. It has often been mentioned, both in official and unofficial circles, that large number of thefts in the area are due to jealousy between affines. Probably this is one of the ways in which various elements within a kinship group try to retain a relative balance of wealth. Another way is to ridicule modern dress when one of the yonnger generations wears it at home. Anyhow, the local people testify to the fact that in the last twenty years there has been a considerable increase in the bride "price" and expenditure on feasts and hiring of "bands" of Bhangi musicians from the towns.[2] Whereas 20 years ago a Bhilala bride would be worth Rs. 100, now it is approximately, Rs. 800. We have already mentioned that this increased expenditure on marriages has often to be met by heavy borrowing from the local *Sahukar* (banker) who not only charges a very heavy interest, but since this interest is extracted in kind, it amounts to an even greater burden on the Adivasi. B. K. Dubey and F. Bahadur estimate that the debts per tribal family in Jhabua district can be allocated to the following categories: agricultural needs (35.0%), social and religious — mainly marriage — ceremonies (11.9%), domestic consumption (33.1%), other reasons (20.0%).[3]

Quite a great deal of what the Adivasis produce over and above their bare subsistence requirements is syphoned off by the urban elements through payment of debts, bribery and advocate fees. Since the Adivasi is used to a very low level of living, and this goes even for the relatively better placed among them, he tolerates this drain on his resources. The relation with the *Sahukar* is an ongoing process in which the *Sahukar* acts as the banker, warehouse keeper, a reliable friend and a valuable contact in the town. Through the *Sahukar* he may arrange the purchase of a gun, engage a carpenter or a mason or a valuable contact with the police. Usually the Adivasi needs a small sum of money to spend in every *Hat* that he visits and usually he

carries no money on his person when travelling to the *Hat.* This sum he is sure to get from his *Sahukar.* Each client of a *Sahukar* is called an *Asami.* An *Asami* is expected to take part in a few rituals of their *Sahukars* also, for instance, he may send his daughters to fill water during a marriage in the *Sahukar's* house. He may also be asked to help in holding aloft a cloth providing shade for the bride or the groom as she or he goes in a procession. The Adivasis are quite often dependent on their *Sahukars* for grains for consumption during the lean season. It is therefore practically impossible for an Adivasi to think of not having an account (*Khata*) with some *Sahukar* or another.[4]

III

Earlier we have mentioned the sources of income of the Adivasis. It would be appropriate to mention here that the Adivasis not only market what we have called the commercial crops, such as groundnuts and vegetables, but in different seasons, practically all the commodities that they produce. Thus, in October and November maize and millets, during May and June toddy, during December–February forest wood and during April groundnuts come to the market. It is true that if the Adivasi was not under pressure from his *Sahukar* creditors probably not so much of the cereal crop would come to the market, but even if this factor was absent many of the tribals would still bring their surplus to the *Sahukar* because they know that it is relatively safer from thieves when it is with their *Sahukars.* By December-January the major commercial crop—groundnut—comes to the markets. As we have mentioned earlier the Adivasi does not normally keep with him a supply of seeds for this crop. The seed is purchased on credit and, after the crop is ready, double the quantity of seed is returned to the *Sahukar.* The surplus is sold entirely for cash. Under the influence of the Block some of the progressive farmers now do preserve groundnut seeds but the proportion of such farmers is not very great. During the dry and scarcity season the tribals scour the countryside for whatever commodity that can be sold in the markets—dried Mahuwa, toddy, grass for cattle feed, Teemru leaves for wrapping retailed items, Charaunji seeds that are used for putting in sweetmeats,

wood by cart load and head load for burning, and lac. The vast forest resources, together with loans from the *Sahukar*, and since recent years, the scarcity relief works, help the tribal to subsist and be supplied with minimum quantity of grains, during the hungry months between April and August. It is interesting to note here that many of the typically rural commodities, such as milk, ghee (clarified butter), grains and cattle feed may be impossible to find in a large number of villages but are available, at a price, in the commercial centres.

The economy of the urban centres is almost entirely based on provision of commercial services to the Adivasis. There are, however, a number of small industries located in these centres. For example, Alirajpur has a number of castes engaged in producing some of the commodities consumed by the Adivasis. Of these, the important ones are bullock cart wheels produced by Khatis, black clay pots produced by the potters, *Khara* (tit-bits) by the Kahars. Cloth and jewellery, two of the most heavily sought items, are imported from other towns. Iron implements, arrow heads and even arrow sticks are . also often imported from outside Alirajpur and sold to the Adivasis. The town, therefore, lacks major productive functions and is entirely geared to, and dependent on, the maximum commercial exploitation of the Adivasi hinterland. Since the traditional agriculture is relatively stagnant, the town's economy too is stagnant. One important lesson which emerged from the last decade's intensive development activity in rural Alirajpur is that, nature, that is, soil and climatic conditions, have set a rather low limit for the development of agriculture since the undulating and stony soil is unsuited for irrigation or application of mechanised farming. This is of course not to say that there is no room for improvement. There can be a considerable improvement even in the existing pattern of agricultural production; but this would require very heavy investment. The amount actually invested even in the so called "intensive" period of development that is, under the S.M.P.T.B. (Special Multi Purpose Tribal Block), was hardly sufficient. At this stage it is not our objective to suggest a plan of development in Alirajpur but rather to point out the

enormity of the development task that would have to be undertaken to change the economic structure of the Adivasi farmers. Our reason for pointing out the significant links between the rural and urban systems has largely been to show that the rural and urban systems are closely inter-linked, forming a larger fundamental system of rural-urban relations. Any change desired in the rural set-up must take account of this fact before it can succeed.

IV

One of the reasons, mentioned by intelligent Adivasis as well as by others, to explain Adivasi's lack of interest in self-improvement is the incidence of dacoities committed in the region (See table 15).

Table 15: Statement showing the Contents of Decoity in 1963 classified as Challan According to Police Station Sub-Divisional Area, Alirajpur.

Sl. No.	Name of Police Station	Over Rs. 1000	Over Rs. 100	Over Rs.10	Less than Rs. 10	Total
1.	Alirajpur	–	64	62	6	132
2.	Jobat	–	43	24	1	66
3.	Bhahra	–	29	25	3	57
4.	Sorwa	1	27	20	2	50
5.	Sondwa	3	32	8	–	43
6.	Bakhat Garh	2	7	4	1	14
7.	Kathiwara	–	8	3	–	11
	Total	6	210	146	13	375

In the opinion of the officials, Alirajpur police station area is particularly affected by the criminal elements. The pattern of robberies manifested by table 15 is not typical. This area "leads" not only in dacoities but also murders as table 16 clearly suggests.

offenders. This is an important indicator of the fact that the rural and urban societies are in the process of a more intimate involvement with each other. I learnt that a particular *vanya* president of a commercial caste village *Panchnyat* is very friendly with many of the suspicious characters among the tribals in his circle.

The way in which the law and order machinery functions has a general bearing on the tendency to commit all kinds of unlawful acts. If the agents of law and order generally act unscrupulously and capriciously then the weaker sections of population lose faith in the justice of the system of power, there is also a general sense of frustration, lack of will to do better in life through legitimate means and an increased sense of defeat. In some villages the situation has become so bad that people feel that whatever they may do or not do they have to face trouble from the government. One such village—Gahwan—was studied by the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Gwalior, under the supervision of the author. The investigator in his report writes: "The proverbs prevalent among Bhils of Gahwan may well convey their pessimistic feelings regarding the uncertainty of life. One of the proverbs, for instance, is: "A sickle does not fit well in a sword-cover nor does Bhil in life."

Let us, at this stage, give some of our reflections on the causes of a high degree of social *anomie* in the environs of Alirajpur. Ever since independence a more complex and impersonal system of justice and law and order has been established. The coming of this new system has accompanied increasing monetisation, on the one hand, and a certain amount of dispersal of political authority, on the other. Increased monetisation has furthered the tribal's dependence on the urban system and also brought about their closer involvement with the unscrupulous businessmen, advocates, and corrupt police and revenue officials, etc. Whereas increased monetisation has tended to augment demands of the society from the individual, as for instance, for higher "bride wealth" and conspicuously expensive marriage feasts, at the same time it has not materially affected his produc-

tive capacity. All this has happened simultaneously with the introduction of a formally more human system of law and justice but which is at the same time incapable of actually fulfilling its ideals mainly because it has to be run by the officials who are far from being devoted to its ideals and principles. The result is the creation of an incompetent machinery which has not only reduced the enthusiasm of a large number of tribals for a better life, but has also made a large number of them criminal-minded.

V

Shri Moge, referring to the ever-present fear of robberies, wrote in one of his reports : "the tribals, therefore, do not dare to lay orchards, grow vegetable gardens, develop a big poultry farm or even grow good crops by adopting improved methods of agriculture. The menace is so great that even *pukka*-built houses are dismantled and removed." Here we see in a nutshell the inter-connection between the law and order situation and the developmental aspect of a society. Various suggestions have been advanccd to limit and fight this meance. One of the most common proposals is to make the Adivasi live in denser localities. The Government has, for example, settled a large number of households of Gahwan in a nucleated hamlet. But as we have mentioned earlier there are sound economic as well as security reasons for the tribals to live on their own maize fields. For example, maize being the most important crop for the tribals they must constantly guard it. Again, if they built their houses next to one another they would be building on good quality maize land and, lastly, composting the field is easier if it is nearer the house. Besides, the economic and security reasons made the tribals to develop a more acute sense of familial privacy. As a result of all these factors unless living in nucleated localities is seen to be far more advantageous than otherwise, the schemes of resettlement are not likely to succeed.

Another way out suggested is to increase the number of police on guard duty. Roaming parties of policemen have, however, often proved to be irksome to the peaceful tribals because the police have the tendency to bully them and demand food

and liquor. Again, for properly performing the watch and ward functions in this sub-montane and sparsely populated areas a very large number of policemen would be required which is out of proportion to the value of the property to be protected.

At this moment it would be too difficult for us to propose some remedies for the very serious problem of crime in Alirajpur. We do, however, wish to emphasise that further research in this aspect ought to be undertaken to arrive at some concrete policy of dealing with the problem. Unless this problem is successfully tackled the economic and social advancement of the tribal will remain very slow. Despite our hesitation to put forward suggestions for tackling this problem we may indicate below certain general directions in which the solutions may be found :

i) Simplification of the machinery of justice so that the tribal can easily grasp the demands of justice as understood at a higher level and relate them to his own norms. For example, very often a murderer openly admits his guilt to the police but by the time his case arrives at the court, the advocates have intervened and made the offender change his statements.

ii) The employment of such police officers as have greater empathy for the tribals and have a better understanding of their traditions and problems.

iii) Improved communication between isolated hamlets and police posts.

iv) Training of the tribal personnel for undertaking modern roles and their increased involvement in all spheres of administration.

VI

The development agencies are sub-systems within the administrative system of the sub-division of Alirajpur. There are three major departments connected with the development of the backward region. From October 1956 to the beginning of 1966, the Development Blocks were the major agency of "direct-

ed change" with the Department of Tribal Welfare playing a significant supplementary role to the "Block". In January 1966, the State Government abolished the posts of Block Development Officers and Social Education Officers, as a result of which the whole set-up of the "Block" administration and functions underwent a sharp change. Since our fieldwork was largely done before this significant development we shall confine ourselves to the discussion of the relations between the "Block" and other sub-systems in the regional social set-up as they existed before the change mentioned above. Besides the "Blocks" and the Tribal Welfare Department we should also mention the Education Department with its schools spread over the whole of the countryside, as a development agency. Since 1965, certain important administrative changes have taken place in the educational organisation as well. A great majority of schools have been administratively taken over by the Tribal Welfare Department, though the technical guidance of the schools is still vested in the officers of the Educational Department.

Madhya Pradesh had three types of Blocks—Special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks, Multipurpose Tribal Blocks and National Extension Service Blocks (N.E.S. Blocks). The N.E.S. Block scheme was spread over a period of three five-year Plans. During the first five years of stage I of the scheme, each block got a grant of Rs. 500,000. The second stage of five years was supported, in addition by grants from the Home Ministry of the Union Government to the tune of Rs. 7 lakhs so that altogether during the five year period nearly Rs. 12 lakhs were available for development schemes. In the third stage of the scheme, most of the special schemes of development were supposed to start yielding results so that only a small number of schemes were supported further from State funds. In the last year of the developmental scheme only the technical assistance was to be provided by the Extension Staff which was to be ultimately absorbed into the regular departments of the government. Some of the Tribal Blocks were to be treated on a special basis and given larger grants. Special Multi-purpose Blocks Scheme came into force in Alirajpur in 1958 and this special status of the block lasted for nearly seven years instead of five, that is, until April 1965. During

this period the Home Ministry gave grants amounting to Rs. 12 lakhs and the State of Madhya Pradesh anamount of Rs. 15 lakhs.

The staff of the block machinery was considerably strengthened during this stage and an attempt was made not only to increase the productive capacity of the rural economy but also to change the attitudes of the tribals. The social education programmes played a vital part, since through them an institutional framework for a progressive community was sought to be developed. Youth organisations, women's organisations, children's nursery schools (*Bal Vadi*), co-operative societies and model farms were set up with the help of the local leadership. In the last stage the tempo of developmental work was expected to be sustained. But it was expected that the burden of development was by then shared more willingly by the local people. At the same time, a substantial amount of technical help was to be continued. At the end of the third stage it was hoped that the rural economy would begin to develop largely on its own, after which only a skeleton extension staff would be needed to help the peasantry in its technical difficulties.

VII

The headquarters of the Special Multi-purpose Tribal Block in Alirajur was located in the town of Alirajpur. The block was headed by a Block Development Officer and his immediate assistants were called the Extension Officers, such as the Agricultural Extension Officer, the Social Extension Officer and the Co-operative Societies' Extension Officer. Besides these, there are other officers of the rank of Extension Officers, such as Panchayat Inspectors and Co-operative Societies' Inspectors. The block was subdivided into Village Level Worker Circles (VLW Circles). Each VLW had about ten villages in his circle in Alirajpur. Since the villages were dispersed, a VLW had to cover a very large area if he conscientiously contacted every hamlet in all his villages. Normally a VLW was expected to spend twenty days in a month in the villages, of which on at least ten days he was also supposed to make night halts at the villages. The Extension Officers too were similarly expected to spend at least ten days on tour to the villages.

The Extension workers normally contacted the villagers through the Patels of the villages but some of them established fairly close relations with the leaders of the hamlets as well. A good VLW normally knew all the hamlets in his circle and also important personalities in these hamlets. But usually the VLWs in the Tehsil had only a few intimate contacts in each village. The work of a VLW consisted of advancing various types of schemes prepared and pushed down by the district or State-level authorities. In theory, a VLW was to convey to his higher officers the felt-needs of the people and also suggest specific schemes of development. Together with the village leaders he was to draw up a development plan for each village in his circle. All the village plans were further pruned and consolidated to form a block plan. The block plans in turn formed the basis for the preparation of a detailed District plan. Each sub-division had also a Development Council formed of the Block Level Officers, Tehsildars, Sub-divional Officer (Revenue) and other Sub-divisional Officers (S.D.O.s), such as SDO—Police, SDO—Forest, SDO—Soil Conservation, etc. There were also a few nominated leaders from among the tribal communities. Usually the local member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and a few other important leaders were included in the Development Council. The Development Council discussed problems of co-ordination, between various departments and the popular leaders, in connection with the development work.

Because the block workers formed part of the administrative system many of their attitudes towards their senior and junior colleagues in the administrative system were similar to those of bureaucracy. The development machinery was expected to adopt a very humane attitude to the common man. The philosophy of development thus was strongly contrasted with that of the "administrators". They (the block people) were enjoined to be patient, persuasive, persistent and empathetic rather than stern, demanding, strict in judgment and ruthless in carrying out orders. This work could progress only if they were creative and pliable. Some of the development workers did adopt the above attitude, but this was not so in majority of cases. And the

reason for their failure was not far to seek. To be successful the development agents must simultaneously adopt two absolutely contrary kinds of attitudes, an attitude of submission *vis-a-vis* their superiors, and an attitude of equality and democratic interchange of ideas with the mass of the peasantry. It will be easily seen that such a situation could result only in mounting personal frustrations and a growing tendency to adopt a hypocritical attitude to the developmental work. When we mention this "dualistic" attitude of the development agents we are greatly simplifying and exaggerating certain tendencies. In fact, one did occasionally find cases of quite perceptive BDOs who often inspired while leading their men. But we must not forget that they too had to conform to the general (formal and informal) norms of administration. For one thing the BDOs were directly subordinate to the Deputy Collectors and District Collectors, who, as heads of Development Councils at the Sub-Divisional and Divisional levels, had a veto over the BDOs. Again, a great majority of the BDOs at least in Madhya Pradesh, had been selected from among the revenue administration. They, therefore, carried with them the attitudes of the bureaucrats.

We must also remember that the plans were formulated at higher levels by the officials whose contact with the rural masses was cursory, but who were at the same time deeply involved in showing, rather showing off, results in districts and hence insisted on grandiloquent plans. The more ambitious the plan the more rigorous should be the preliminary experimentation to be followed by a thorough and systematic supervision. This procedure unfortunately was seldom adopted. The result, more often than not was that "achievement" of targets remained largely on paper. The cynical attitude to work at the bottom was also the result of the fact that most of the development agencies was seldom more than an inconvenient stepping stone to something more sedate and powerful. Towards the tribals particularly, the urban-caste VLWs and Extension Officers felt particularly apathetic because of the general cultural differences between them and their tribal clients as well as a general resistance of the tribal against the *Baboos* of all description. The

preceding discussion is likely to give the impression that there is no difference between the way the block machinery and the other bureaucratic sub-system within the tribal administrative machinery functioned. This would be incorrect, because it was only partly true. The block agents were one of the most effective agents of change in Alirajpur who were trying to bring about fundamental changes in the tribal society. That they were not very successful in bringing these about may be due to the shortcomings already mentioned. Yet they did create a far more favourable image among the tribals than any other department of the Government.[6]

VIII

The Development agents were largely urban-oriented people. Quite a few of them were recruited from the urban villages and towns of the region. A few who came from other regions were also mostly urban-bred people. Lack of urban facilities in the tribal villages was keenly felt by these people and that is why they did not wish to spend too long a period in the Block Development. In Alirajpur we found that a large number of VLWs lived in the town, though their headquarters ought to have been in the villages. Since this was done more or less surreptitiously we could not give figures, but my estimate, after quit a few years of contact with Alirajpur was that not less than 50 per cent of the VLWs lived in urban villages and the town of Alirajpur.

Some of the most backward parts of Alirajpur Block had remained practically uncovered by the Block Agents. The reason given, to some extent justified, was that this was a highly dangerous area where a very large number of murders took place and the tribals were in the habit of waylaying and belabouring even the town folk. It is interesting to note that despite all the risks the Banias had traditional relations with many of their tribal debtors *(Assamis)*. At one time the BDO took the help of a well-known *Sahukar* dealing with some of the backward villages falling within the Gahwan, Ram Singh ki Choki "criminal belt" (see Map) to distribute chemical fertilisers and

improved groundnut seeds. The relations between the commercial elements and the Block authorities were often based on mutual help. The Block authority was responsible for quite a large number of construction projects in the Block area. These were often given to those who were prepared to be of some help to the Block people or who were able to exercise some influence over the Block people. Even a VLW was often able to help a rich Bhilala farmer in getting him a skilled artisan like a mason, specialist in making brick wells and at the same time help his *Kadia* (mason) friend. The manner in which a VLW acted as a trusted help for a Bhilala farmer was illustrated by the case of the VLW of Rajawat circle who took the Patel of Rajawat village all the way to Indore to get him a gun. We were struck by another case of VLW-Vanya-Patel "ganging up" informally to exploit even the resources of the welfare Department for their own pecuniary benefit. During the Mahuwa collecting season the tribal welfare department helped some tribals to open their own "Mahauwa" shops. The tribal shopkeeper was expected to buy Mahuwa locally at a certain price from his own village and sell it to the tribal co-operative society at a previously fixed profit. Through a VLW a certain Bania in Alirajpur fixed that the major portion of the thus bought and stored Mahuwa would be sold to the Bania at a price higher than that fixed between the Patel and the Tribal Department.

Notes and References :

1. Cf. Baines, Sir Athelstane, "Ethnography (Castes and Tribes)", *Encyclopaedia of Indo-Aryan Research*, Strassbury, Karl J. Trubrer, 1912, pp. 100-112.

2. Bailey records a similar phenomenon in which Doms (an untouchable caste like the Bhangis) act as drummers and bandsmen at Kond marriages. Cf. Bailey, *Tribe, Caste and Nation*, *op. cit.*

3. B. K. Dubey and F. Bahadur, *A study of the Tribal People and Tribal Areas of M. P.*, Tribal Research and Development Institute, Indore, 1967, p. 106.

4. Cf. Arsenberg, *The Irish Countrymen*, *op. cit.* discusses a parallel case of Irish peasants, among them the debt is treated as a sign of a continuing relationship between the debtor and the creditor.

5. Cf. J. Dolland, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, Doubleday edition, 1957, pp. 294-314.

6. Cf. G. S. Aurora, "Applied Research and Training Centres in Backward Regions", Khadi Gramodyog, Bombay, June 1966, pp. 601–67.

CHAPTER IX

Extension of the Cultural Frontier

The town is not only seen as a centre of economic and political power but also a crucible of ideas, values and skills.[1] In other words, it is a focus of culture as well. When a tribal comes to town he stays with his *vanya*. The *vanya* offers him a bidi and asks if he would like to have water. The tribal sits quietly for a while in one corner while the vanya carries on a leisurely conversation with other people who might have come to visit him. Normally the Adivasi's interest in the topics of vanya's conversations, such as town's politics of *jati's* affairs or sickness and its treatment or children's education, is minimal. There are, however, many young intelligent Adivasis who begin to find hints in the *vanya's* talk for their own guidance. It is well-known that when the tribals are in real trouble, as during sickness at home which none of their own medicinemen have been able to cure, they go to their *vanya* and ask him for his assistance. The same is true about political affairs. The *vanya* is one of the important advisers to tribal voters.

The *vanya* is not the only channel of communication between the rural and urban systems. There are the development officials of the block who are important channels of progressive influence. Then there are the politicians, and finally, the urbanised tribals employed in the town. Through constant touch with these people, he imbibes certain urban culture idioms, such as "pollution-purity", *jati*, class. He internalises certain stereotypes about himself and also about other religious and *jati* communities. According to these stereotypes the Adivasi is *Ganda* (foolish), *Jangli* (uncivilised), *Kosti* (loin-cloth), *Jalam* (cruel), *Musalman is Dagdeo* (hard and cruel); *vanya* is a *vanar* (monkey), who comes stealing at harvest time; city people generally are referred by them as *Naroo Karoo* (useless beings).

Whereas the Adivasi accepts, in recognition of his inferiority, the epithets levelled at him by the town dweller, the town dweller rejects with contempt what the Adivasi call him. Besides leavening about these stereotypes he also learns to consider some things as of higher value and others of lower, for example, ghee and milk are not only good to eat but also ritually purifying. Some *jatis* are ritually low while others are ritually higher. Some things pollute easily whereas others do not. A bell-metal plate when used by a lower jati becomes *Oshtha* (polluted) and must be rubbed clean. The clay pot must be broken if it comes into contact with a lower *jati*. It is interesting to note that the water pots are kept on a wooden platform in the courtyard and Bhils who are a step lower in the ritual hierarchy are sometimes observed to draw water from a Bhilala's pot, other *jatis* are, however, not allowed to take that liberty. It is true that in practice he does not follow these concepts rigorously or consistantly. These concepts are often more like superficial stereotypes to him. Many of the religious concepts which he accepts are very much simplified and parochialised (in Marriott's sense of the term). During March, April and May and again during December and January a large number of Hindu marriages take place in the town. At this time the *Sahukars* often call upon their *Asamis* (tribal debtor) to help them with a number of helping hands, usually young girls. The young girls, as also the tribal visitors to the town, enjoy watching the pomp and ritual of the town's marriages. Many of the ritual traits and trait complexes seen among the townsmen are repeated in the Adivasi ritual idiom in a modified form.

The manner in which culture radiates from one community to another is determined not only by the frequency of contact but also by the relative socio-cultural levels of the communities.[2] The Adivasis are no doubt in fairly frequent contact with the town's *jatis* but there is a marked difference in the socio-cultural levels of the Adivasi society and the town's society. The lowest economic and social stratum of Alirajpur town's society consists of Koli, Balai and Bhangi *jatis*. They form only about 10 per cent of the population of Alirajpur

town. Barring this submerged section, the town society is able to wield disproportionately higher power, both economic and political, as compared to the rural society. This means that even the tribal leaders of the primary communities, such as Patels occupy a socially inferior position *vis-a-vis* an ordinary trader or an artisan in the town. This structural distance between the tribal and the townsman imposes limitations on the tribal's will to imitate and compete, in cultural terms, with the townsmen. Another reason for the tribal's feeling of inferiority is his linguistic separation from the power-holding roles in the regional system. My observation is that whenever a tribal gets educated and is able to converse in Hindi with as much fluency as the townsmen he begins to adopt culture traits appropriate to his model of the wider culture. Most often it is the Rajput model, and occasionally it is the westernised urban model. Often such marginal people of the tribal culture are disliked by their own kinsmen.

We have mentioned two factors which affect the manner in which culture radiates from the urban system to the rural system, namely, frequency of contact, and relative socio-cultural levels of the two systems. Another factor which is relevant in this connection is the nature of the links. Social-psychologically the links can be affective or utilitarian. To some extent the links between the Raja and the tribals had an element of emotional identification. The Raja was called *Bapji* (father) by his tribal and non-tribal subjects. He was relatively easily approachable and gave his personal attention to the individual as well as collective problems of the tribals. From some Bhilala families he got concubines for his palace. Often these concubines and their offspring were the favourites of the Rajas. During festivals and feasts there were exchanges of presents between the tribals and jagirdars on one side, and the Rajput Raja, on the other. The emotional identification of the Bhilalas with the Rajputs was probably the single most important factor in favour of the tendency of the tribals to imitate the Rajput styles of life to some extent. The contact between the commercial castes and the tribals was, as it still is, by and large utilitarian. The *vanya*

mediates between the impersonal bureaucracy and the tribal. And goods, services and credit which the *vanya* supplies are of obvious utility to him. This is of course not to say that there was no emotive element at all in the relations between the *vanya* and the tribal. In fact, there were some ritual occasions among the urban *jatis* when tribals were given certain peripheral roles to perform. For example, the Balai drummers were employed both at marriages and deaths. The Bhil and Bhilala *assamis* carried the cloth as a sun-shade over the caste Hindu bridegroom. Some of the town castes took part in rural marriages. For example, the Bhilalas employed Bhangi bands from Alirajpur and the potters supplied pots at marriage and *Ujban* (ancestor propitiation) ceremonies. A Bhilala brought turmeric-yellowed rice to his *Sahukar* as a symbol of invitation. But the dominant note of the relationship between the *vanya* and the tribal was and still is utilitarian.

II

Probably an additional cause for the cultural distance between the tribal and the *vanyas* is the antipathy that exists between a meat-eater (Bhils and Balais also eat beef) and alcohol drinker and a teetotaller and vegetarian. I must mention at this juncture some minor Sanskritic reformatory movements which have spread to certain parts of the Bhil country. In Rajasthan, a *Bhagat* movement was started about forty years ago by a Banjara called Gobind Singh. He enjoined upon his tribal followers to give up drinking liquor and eating meat,and take to worshiping Ram. Another *Bhagat* movement was started by one Harinam Singh, a *Khati* (carpenter) of Alirajpur, about twenty years ago. He has a number of followers in Barela-Bhilala and Pataliadominated areas (See Chapter III Map 3). The effect of these movements is to bring the *Bhagat* tribals closer to the *vanya* (*vaish*) model of Sanskritisation. Guru Harinam's *Bhagat*s when coming to town wear dhoti in the *vanya* style and smear sandalwood paste on their foreheads in the Vaishnav style. The point I wish to make is that religious community feeling between a segment of the *khati* and a small section of Barela Bhilala community encourages imitation by the

Barela Bhilalas of the same model of Sanskritisation as that adopted by the *Khatis*, just as emotional identification with the Rajput lineage encouraged a degree of imitation of the Rajput model of Sanskritisation.

III

The townsmen differentiate themselves from the tribal peasantry by referring to the most conspicuous part of the latter's dress. The Adivasis for them are *Kosti* (loin-cloth). *Safa* (turban) symbolises the pride of the tribal. Any time he goes out of his house the *Safa* must be worn, and, normally, he would not come into the presence of a superior person from outside his family without it. The much-remembered Raja of Alirajpur, Partap Singh, who died soon after the merger of the State into the Indian Union in 1947, was very particular about everyone wearing a turban or at least keeping his head covered when out in the bazar. The *Safa* these days distinguishes the contryman from a townsman since the townsmen these days do not wear *Safa*. Nevertheless it is also one of the manifest links the Adivasi has with the mainstream of Indian culture. Wearing a new red *Safa* over his head and a *Dhoti* wrapped round his waist the Adivasi feels almost like a Rajput.[4] The *Dhoti* of the Adivasi is somewhat different in style and function from the *Dhoti* worn by the Hindus in the North. It is a sheet of cloth about 2½ yds x 1½ yds and is normally worn in the fashion of a cloak thrown over one shoulder with its two ends tied in front. When worn like this it covers the whole of the back barring one shoulder and a considerable part of the front portion of the body.

Ordinarily the Adivasis do not wear shoes at home or while working in the fields, but many possess country shoes (*Khasdas*) which are worn during excursions outside the village. These are made of tough thick leather made to last long and wear well over the rough country paths. Adivasi Chamars who make them sell a pair for Rs 5 or Rs 6 in the weekly markets. From the *Hats* are also purchased rubber sandals prepared from old tyres, for about eight annas each. Possessing factory-made shoes is a symbol of higher status in the same manner as is wearing a muslin dhoti.

Fashionable young men are fond of wearing silver jewellery, such as ear rings, bracelets and silver button chains. Young men also wear sleeveless and collarless shirts. Often flowery coloured patterns are machined or small bits of round glass sewn to make the shirts more decorative. It is interesting to note that rural and urban fashions, though forming a continuum, have each a different pattern. The Adivasi young men like to wear highly ornate shrit and when they can afford it they also like to wear jewellery. Even pins may sometimes be converted into garlands. The scarves must be bright in colour and made attractive with beads and tinsel.

Both men and women are fond of ornaments which are usually made of some kind of silver. Though women wear more jewellery than men, younger men too are fond of gaudy scarves and heavy jewellery. The jewllery worn by women is not very different from that common throughout the Rajput-dominated Northern India. Girls have a pyramid like design tattooed on their chins, and spotted semi-circular "arches" on both temples. It is believed that tattooing besides making the face look more attractive is liked by *Bhagwan* (God) who recognises people after death by their tattoos.

IV

Different elite-models are discernible from different dress items used in various social contexts. The Rajput items of dress, such as turban, *Dhoti,* shrit, sword dangling from a leather scabbard become more significant in wider social contexts.[8] When an Adivasi goes to a Bhagoria *Hat* (market) around April, he goes dressed in his very best and newest clothes. One of the high points in his dress may be a leather sword belt. The sword is no longer permitted to be carried to Bhagoria *Hats* but the sword belt is still considered a prestige item. The marriage dress of the *Lara* (groom) is also the traditional Rajput dress, consisting of a turban with plume, long, full-sleeved Rajput style *Chugha* (coat) with a string belt, a Rajput style pair of trousers (*Churidar Pajama*), a long white or yellow scarf tied across the chest and a long sword in a scabbard. The

guests who come to a marriage also wear more items of the Rajput or town style of apparel.

However, while dressing for special occasions, the Adivasi does not *always* follow the Rajput model. The reason being that the town culture which forms the dominant cultural environment of the tribal is organised by an aggregation of many models of which the Rajput model — though still paramount — is being affected by other models. There is first of all the model of the *vanya* culture. Until the rule of the Raja, *vanya* culture with its emphasis upon simplicity and austerity was of secondary importance as compared to the Rajput model which emphasised ostentatiousness in dress and food, and physical or coercive prowess in the manner of speech and bearing. But after independence the Rajput aristocracy has been very much reduced in importance, though not altogether eliminated from society. As a result of the reduced impact of the Rajput model the *vanya* model is gradually gaining ground. This is symbolised in a tendency among many of the Patel families who have adopted the *vanya* manner of *dhoti* and long shirts. Intermingled with these models is the western model of dressing. Young people among the townsmen especially the ones belonging to *Asada* and Rajput castes invariably use western-style shirts and trousers. The western influences, in turn, tangentially enter the tribal mode of dressing. As an example may be pointed out the highly ornately designed tribal shirts (*Duglo)* and the scarves. The tailors of Alirajpur used to stitch a collarless and sleeveless shirt, somewhat short in length, roughly in the style of of the *vanya* waistcoat. During the last few years, as the bush shirts came into the market for the westernised youth and government servants, the tailors have started producing very ornately patterned bush shirts for their tribal clientele. These bush shirts are ornamented upon by machining flowery designs with coloured threads. The important thing to be noted here is that the western style of the bush shirt is thoroughly transformed to suit the tribal taste; in this way, a culture trait originating from an outside socio-cultural system is absorbed into the tribal system without substantially altering the

structural boundary between the tribal and urban socio-cultural systems.

V

The staple diet of the Adivasi consists of millet flour *roti* and *Ghugri* — a variety of lentils, cooked like a soup. Occasionally maize flour may be cooked into a saltish paste called *Rabdi*, a delicacy the Adivasis have received from their Gujarati neighbours. Rice and wheat are too dear to eat, though some of the richer farmers do grow wheat on irrigated land. The Block Development authorities have encouraged and helped people to dig wells or, as in some cases, reinforce their wells. These wells have made it possible for the farmers to grow two crops on some plots of irrigated land. Many of the farmers who own wells have started growing vegetables and fruits, such as papayas and guavas. Most of the vegetables are sold in the weekly market and only a small quantity is consumed by the Adivasis themselves. Among the fruits, mangoes provide the richest harvest and count for the bullk of the fruit consumption. Occasionally, Teemru, an inferior variety of dates and some wild berries are also available as additional food. During spring, ripe Mahuwa flowers are gathered from nearby jungles and used either to distil wine or are dried and stored for future consumption. The quantity and quality of food available varies drastically in course of the years. Months between September and March — the period begining with *Kharif* harvesting and going up to *Rabi* harvesting — is comparatively easy. After Holi *(Bhagoria)* festival the "belts" begin to be tightened. During May, June and July near-starvation conditions are reached in many Adivasi families. This is also a season for various palm tree saps, of which *Neera*, the Tal sap, ripens during May and continues till the beginning of July. *Neera* is fermented or rather allowed to ferment to become *Tari* or toddy in containers hanging from the slashed palm tops. A *Roti* (flat bread) of *Bajra* (millets) with dried Mahuwa and plenty of fermented toddy is all that an average Adivasi can provide to the members of his family. Children and adults all drink. In respect of food the tribal and the non-tribal show a certain continuity as well as

discontinuity. The townsmen belonging to certain ritually lower castes, such as Kolis, Bhangis and Telis are very fond of toddy and wine. Muslims, like tribals, drink practically every day during the summer. For townsmen and those Adivasis who can afford it, maize is a staple diet. But Adivasi preparations have very little salt and spices as compared to the Bania's meals. Distilled Mahuwa flowers and palm sap are consumed in sufficient quantities during their respective seasons. Mahuwa wine can be stored for a much longer period. It is, therefore, available in small quantities throughout the year.

VI

Food is not only a matter of biological sustenance but has also certain cultural or communicational facets.[4] The tribals commonly eat very simple food. To garnish their food they use a little salt and turmeric and almost negligible amounts of other spices. They, however, use liberal quantities of red chillies. The obvious reason for the difference in their food and that of the "townsmen" of the region is that the items which have to be purchased from the bazar with money, such as salt, spices, etc, are used in modest quantities. Salt and spices, (Masala) have a special place on collective-ritual occasions. For example, when the bridegroom's party offer a goat to the clan deity of the bride's village and the meat of the goat is being cooked, it is the bride's parents who must supply the groom's party with the Masala. In a prosperous house a guest is served a meat dish. Usually a small chicken is sacrificed for the occasion and is cooked by one of the senior male members. The guest is usually served in the verandah (Patsal) of the house. Normally he may not enter the *Ghar* because it is the sacred abode of the household goddess *(Ghirsari)*. Before serving the food it is usual to serve *Daru* (Mahuwa wine).

Only when a guest is fairly highly esteemed is he served chicken. A less esteemed guest may be offered the day's normal food, a plateful of cooked maize flour paste (*Rabdi*) or boiled pulse soup (*Ghugri*). Every meal ends with the guest being

given a *lota* (brass vessel) full of water to clean his mouth, wash hands and drink. In more prosperous Patel families the Hindu custom of offering arecanut (*supari*) at the end of the meal has been adopted. But in ordinary Bhilala families this is not done. Serving *Supari* together with water and *Biri*, have however a special ritual significance. One of the rituals in the marriage contract, *Sanvin Bharna*, ends with an offering of these items by the bride's family to the groom's family. Water, *Supari* and tobacco are also placed by the youngest son at the feet of the corpse of his father. It is interesting to note here that though *Supari* serving is not a regular feature of tribal etiquette yet this trait of the urban Hindu culture has been adopted to add significance to the tribal ritual. When an Adivasi goes to the bazar he brings back for the children and those staying at home, some saltish tit-bits called *Kharya* and *Bhajalya*. These are great favourities of the Bhilalas especially during the toddy season when they are taken as snacks together with toddy. In the town, two types of *Khara* are prepared. One type prepared by the Kahar caste is meant especially for the Adivasis. It is usually made of thicker dough of gram flour *(Beson)*, prepared only with water. Adivasi *Kharya* is of thicker and larger size and a packet of it looks bigger than the other type made for the town people. *Kharya* for the townsmen is made with the gram (flour) dough to which fat is also added. This kind of *Kharya* is also called *Sev*. *Shehri* (town) *Kharya* is prepared by the *Brahmin Halwais* (sweet-meat makers) and is of very much finer qulity. Both types are sold for exactly the same price though the Adivasi type must cost the *Kahars* much less to prepare. *Kharya* is also used as an item of ritual significance. For example, the bride's party carries a plateful of it with proper pomp and show to the camp of the groom's party on the first afternoon of their stay at the wife's village.

Though food items used by the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis may be similar, the meaning attributed to them is markedly different. *Kharya* (*Shehri Sev*) is a normal part of the townsmen's diet but for the tribals who import *Kharya* (Adivasi) from the bazar, it has a special significance. The etiquette of

behaviour at the collective feasts of the Adivasis and the local townsmen are markedly different though there are certain formal similarities. At an Adivasi feast the women and children are fed first unlike at a town feast where women eat last. The diners are made to sit in a row. Leaves of *Khakri* are given to each person who uses them as a plate. Usually *Khichri* made of boiled, pounded millets is served since it can be cooked on a mass scale relatively easily. Curried meat or pulses are served by a number of people who carry around pots of curry to every diner. The Adivasi never shouts for more food even if he is not satisfied. After he has finished what ever was served to him, he gets up, washes his hand, rinses his mouth and gets busy with his own pre-occuption, such as dancing or singing. The diner in a town feast demands to be served food for himself as well as others sitting next to him, even if they do not desire to eat more. Gluttony is taken as a part of the fun of a feast and wastages of food may be considered a matter of pride by the persons who arrange the feast. All the leftovers are distributed to the *Bhangis* (sweepers). Adivasis on the other hand never waste food. In fact, there is hardly enough to satisfy all the participants.

VII

In their essentials the Adivasi agricultural instruments are no different from those of the peasants of the plains. From Mal Singh Mukhi (aged 90 in 1960) of Bhaidya clan, I learnt that as long as he could remember his family had been using the light plough. He said that his father had first brought Bakhar (turner) from a *Mali* (vegetable grower) of Alirajapur. He said that malis were very good cultivators and the Bhilalas had learnt a great deal from working with the *Malis* as helping hands. There are a little over 20 households of *Malis* in Alirajpur town. They own fairly good cultivable land on the fringe of the town. They grow vegitable crops on well irrigated plots and maize largely for their own consumption. Many cultivators employ Adivasi farm hands (*Pavar*). The Rajput Jagirdars too must have been a source of influence in this area. The Rajputs are very often married into relatively better developed peasant areas of Rajasthan and Gujarat. Even today it is possible to find in their households

some servants who had been brought by the women married into their households. These servants were often expected to grow, such crops as the women folk were accustomed in their own families. It is possible that many of the important implements came to the area through these familial networks as well.

Many Adivasis are intelligent and capable of adjusting the implements to their own soil conditions. Once a turner shear was brought to the village of Bamanta by the VLW. This turner was used to turn the soil in between the rows of standing crops in the Malwa region. The Adivasis found that they could not use it in their own fields because the shear was too big for the distance which they customarily allowed between two rows of crops. One of the farmers went to Alirajpur and got the shear shortened suitably in order to use it on his land. The way in which the bunding of the fields has been accepted by the Adivasi also shows that the Adivasi farmer is as alive to the possibility of benefiting from improved technology as any peasant of the plains. When soil conservation first came to Alirajpur, we were told by a VLW that the Block authorities tried to tell the Adivasis about the benflts of earth bunding; but it was found that earth bunding was not successful where the incline of the ground was greater. Torrents of rain water tended to wash them away. The Adivasi substituted the stone bund in place of the earth bund. Stone bunding enabled the water to seep through the stones. But at the same time loose earth was caught by the stones and this minimised erosion. Incidentally, it also improved the incline of the fields.

VIII

Three religions, with their numerous variants, have coexisted in Alirajpur region since the thirteenth century.[5] These are North Indian Hinduism and Jainism, Islam and the tribal form of Hinduism. Hinduism in its relatively advanced Sanskritic form has dominated the commercial centres and the Rajput ruling lineages. It (Hinduism) has thus had the advantage of the backing of the political elite. Since practically all the commercial and servicing castes, except the Muslims, were and still

are Hindus, Hinduism has also had the added advantage of being backed by these wealthy and volatile groups. Some Muslim castes, such as Makranis were at one time dominating the army and the Rajput Raja's administration, but their domination was never absolute nor did it last sufficiently long to pose a challenge to caste-Hindu domination. Muslims, like Hindus, are divided into castes and sects. The two major sects of Muslims in Alirajpur are the Sunni represented by such castes as Pathan, Syed and Makrani and the Shias who are mostly Bohras. The Bohras are, by and large, traders and shop-keepers. They compete with other Hindu commercial castes (like, Banias and Telis) for the tribal market. The religious impact of Bohras on the tribals is insignificant compared to that of the caste-Hindus of the town; mainly because the tribals had been integrated into the broad scheme of Hindu social organisation even before the Muslim entry into this region.

The Rajput princes of Alirajpur had an elaborate organisation to look after their ritual needs. There were offices of the *Raj Purohit* (ritual performer), *Raj Jyotishi* (astrologer), *Raj Govd* (bard) and *Raj Guru* (teacher), Different families of Brahmins were appointed to each of these offices. The *Raj Purohits* not only officiated at all ritual functions, such as, *Yagna* at marriages, the annual *Dusshera* festivals and other auspicious occasions, but, they also performed rituals and kept mourning taboos instead of the Raja at times of death and other inauspicious occasions. The *Raj Jyotishi* acted as the official astrologer for the king. The *Raj Gaud* was the bard of the royal lineage and the *Raj Guru* was consulted for any moral or religious problems of the royal family or the regime. The *Raj Gurus* were of Gosain sect which, it seems, had been open to the Brahmin and non-Brahmin twice born castes in the past, but had in due course become an endogamous *jati*. The Rajput ruling lineage also had a sacred totem namely, hare (*Shisha*). The legend states that the founder of the kingdom Anand Deo, who belonged to Rathor lineage of the Rajputs, was one day hunting in the region. Upon noticing a hare he gave it a chase. But the hare disappeared behind a rock on top of a hill. Meanwhile the sun

went down and Rup Deo had to sleep on top of the hill. At night he dreamt that the goddess Chavmundaji appeared and commanded him to build a fort on the hill. Next day Anand Deo got up and planted a post at the spot where the previous evening the hare had disappeared and built a fort at that very spot. *Shesha Khunt* (hare post) is even now accorded the status of a sacred totem by the royal family as well as by the Bhilalas.

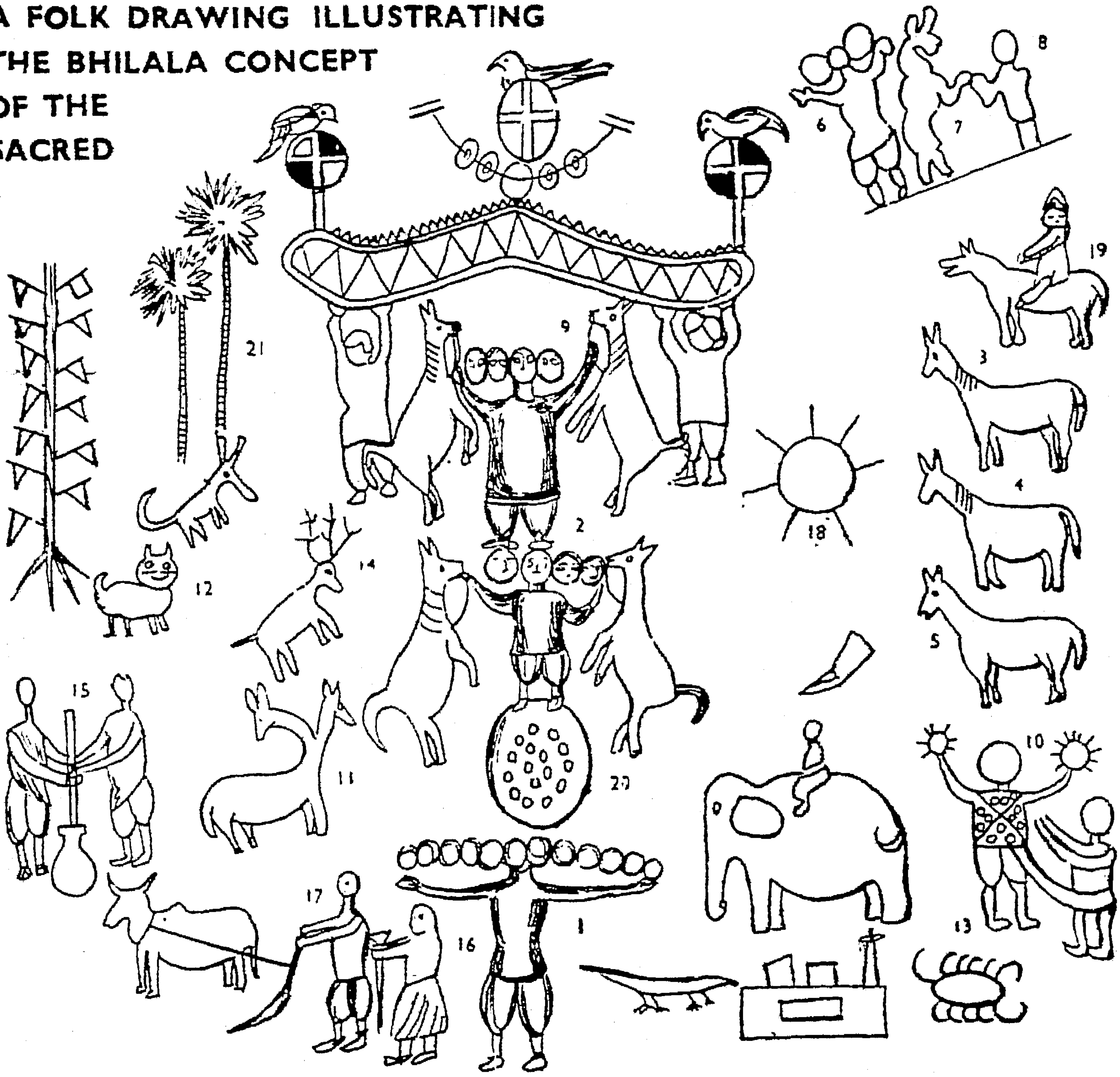
The Bhilalas have been deeply affected by the Rajput culture; but whereas the Rajputs have taken on all the major innovations of the Sanskritic ritual the Bhilala ritual has tended to evolve its own parochial versions of the Hindu ritual idiom. Probably one of the major reasons for the absence of highly sanskritic rituals among the Bhilalas is that they have not accepted the Brahmins to serve as priests in their marriages. Probably because of the general poverty of the tribal people the Brahmins have also felt the Bhilalas less attractive a "market" in which to "push" their sanskritic rituals. During the greater part of the year the Tehsil of Alirajpur has a large number of roaming *Sadhus* (mendicants) and *Sanysis* (ascetics). Most of them say that they are on pilgrimage to the sacred river Narbada. Alirajpur town has a temple, located on the banks of Sukhar river. Attached to this temple there is a rest house for the pilgrims (*Yatris*). The Hindus of Alirajpur are generous in their support of these *Yatris*. When the pilgrims travel through the countryside they keep to the roads. We often heard that these pilgrims were sometimes preyed upon by the tribal robbers. The tribals, rare exceptions apart, ignore the pilgrims and refuse to give them food or shelter at night.

IX

The notion of the supernatural pervades all the significant social and individual aspects of the life of Bhilalas. Ritual significance is accorded to all the important moments in the seasonal cycle of life activities as well as major moments in the transition of an individual from one position to another in the social structure. In this section we will take up some of the major strains in their belief-system and the rituals associated

DRAWING-3

A FOLK DRAWING ILLUSTRATING THE BHILALA CONCEPT OF THE SACRED



with these beliefs. When the Bhilalas are asked what their religion is they invariably reply. "You call us what you may. We are Bhilalas and our religion is our own". The idea that the integral life pattern can be compartmentalised into religious and secular halves is foreign to Bhilala culture.[6] The Bhilalas have a clan priest from within their own community and we have seen that his office is hereditary. But it is must be kept in mind that the priest of the clan (and the village) does not have highly specialised ritual techniques that may be beyond the ability of other members of his family or clan. He performs simple rituals which do not call for remembering complicated verbal passages, and consist of, by and large, manual operations. In a marriage ceremony the young priest, Jwan Singh, of Bamanta was continuously being guided by the older and more experienced people. At another marriage, in Rajawat, a village in the neighbourhood of Bamanta, the old priest of the clan did not come at night to guide and perform his share of the important ceremony of *Done Badalna.* One of his distant relatives took over the function of the priest. Moreover, the priest is not exclusively engaged in his ritual vocation; he is primarily a farmer like all other Bhilalas. He is merely the most important ritual functionary but not the only one. Patel, Badwa, head of a household all have ritual functions to perform in some context or the other.

It is difficult to say how far the Bhilala religious beliefs and ritual represnnt "Hindu" as contrasted with "tribal" elements, since "Hindu" religion is itself a compendium of a very large number of cults and belief systems varying from the "animistic" pole to the highly philosophical pantheistic and monistic pole. We can nevertheless say that some of the popular beliefs which form the core of the Hindu social system are explicitly accepted by the Bhilalas. The most important of these beliefs is regarding the ritual evaluation of different tribal castes. We have already mentioned that customary attitude to beef eating determines the ritual status of a tribal caste.

Many of the Bhilala gods and deities are propitiated with meat offerings. The ancestral spirits — *Khatriya Deo*—also likes oblations of blood. But the highest tribal god — *Kumpala Deo*

or *Baba Deo* — is vegetarian. However, this does not necessarily prove that vegetarianism is accorded higher value. Meat eating is normally associated with festive occasions. Thus, at the time of marriage or any other communal feast, meat is a cherished dish. But no domestic animal is just killed for eating; it is always sacrificed to propitiate either the ancestors or a deity. Meat eating is associated with social occasions. An Adivasi cannot afford to have meat on a normal day. Before the mortuary feasts, which take place only once in many years, the clans are tabooed consumption of meat to emphasise a piacular mood. Meat and fish are taboo in the house of a person where a death has taken place or where the family has given the names of its dead to the "one who carries the burden" (*Bharjhela*) or the final death feast *Ujban*.

From the ethnographic data it appears that the tribals have divided the ritual sphere of their life into two discrete zones, one of which is associated with animal sacrifices and consumption of meat, and the other with vegetarianism and offerings of only vegetarian foods. The annual worship of *Kumpalya Deo*, *Navai* which is the worship of the crop of fresh vegetables and *Duda Pujan* — the worship of the first cob of ripe maize—are all vegetarian occasions when intoxicants may be consumed while meat is taboo. All deities are thought to prefer vegetables. Many of the deities who are both protectors and destroyers of cattle and people are propitiated by oblations of blood and offerings of meat. These deities are *Khera bai*, the protectress of cows, *Bhabhesta Kahadya*, the protectress of buffaloes, *Sitla mai*, the deity of small pox and *Moti Jhara mai*, the deity of typhoid. Bhilalas accept the ritual superiority of their vegetarian *vanya Sahukars* (usurers). But this recognition of their superiority has not caused any widespread Internalisation of the vanya sanskritic model since no attempt has as yet been made by them to adopt vegetarian practices. Among the Bhils of Banswara and Udaipur there is a widespread *Bhagat* movement, which preaches vegetarianism and teetotalism among many other sanskritic practices. But that movement has had no impact at all on the Bhilalas of Alirajpur.

Despite their higher ritual status the *vanyas* of Alirajpur do not mind serving, or being served food by Bhilalas or Bhils. But Balais and Chamars are considered as pollutants. Why the Bhils who eat beef do not become as polluting as Balais or Chamars who also eat beef is not explained by them. In fact, when a *vanya* goes to the villages often, he has to depend on the food served by the beef-eating Bhils. Balais and Chamars are untouchable castes even in the neighbouring areas. The tribals believe in the notion of *Bhagwan*, which is obviously a belief held in common with all contemporary Hindus. *Bhagwan* is thought of as omnipresent, omniscient, universal spirit. But this highly abstract notion is not integrated with the ideas of personalised gods, totems, deities and spirits. In fact, the Adivasis do not have a coherent and well-developed intellectual view of the spiritual world. In this they differ from many other primitives. The Adivasis greet each other with "Ram Ram" which is a common greeting between Hindus all over Northern India. But very few of the Adivasis know the story of Ram.

We will describe below a very interesting drawing which was done by a *Badwa* (medicine man) at the time of the celebration of a religious festival called *Pithwara* in a Bhilala family of Borjhar village. *Pithwara Pujan* is held around the time when Hindus celebrate *Rakhi*. The propitiation and prayer of *pithwara* can be conducted on a convenient day before the ceremony of ancestor propitiation during the month of August. Unlike *Rakhi* which emphasises sister-brother relationship, *Pithwara* emphasises the affinal bond relation. Since *Pithwara* is a relatively expensive ceremony for the Adivasis it is held only in fulfilment of a vow, in a prosperous year. The drawing was done on the wall in red-ochre by the *Badwa* (see drawing 3); it contains a) twelve-headed Rawan ([1]); Four-headed Chavanda (Durga or Kali ([2]); *Pithwara* horse (the sacred turmeric horse ([3]); Goddess Rola Bedi horse ([4]); Horse of the Blue goddess ([5]); The Elephant-eared god([6]); The horse-faced god([7]) and The one-handed cow-faced one([8]).

Beside the above, there were also the following figures on the drawing. Horse of the (unknown) god (*Dev na Ghoda* ([9]);

Chhinalya[10] (see figure, the meaning of the figure remained unexplained); two-headed horse *(do Mukha Ghoda*[11]); cat[12]); scorpion[13]); stag[14]); birds; milk churners[15]); the woman sower[16]); the ploughman[17]); sun and moon[18]); and the great horse that spreads messages[19].) Within a circle some sacred spots were shown to represent the forgotten ones[20]). There are also figures of women at the milk churner; a man and a women with the seed drill and the plough; a pair of bullocks; palms and other trees[21]); and an acrobat with a bear.

It is interesting to note that the sacred figures include not only some of the gods and demons associated with Hindu mytho logy, such as, Rawan (the enemy of Ram), *Chaumunda* (the goddess of destruction) but also a number of totemic signs (trees, animals, sun and moon) which are today not closely associated with the practiced religion of the Bhilalas, as well as some of the more specific Bhilala gods and spirit deities, such as *Rola Bedi, Rani Kadal, Khatria dev* and *Bhabesta Kohadia.* Some of the figures even show the combination of animal and human forms. The inclusion within the sacred of the profane chores, such as milk churning, ploughing and sowing further show that the sharp distinction is not made between the profane and the sacred. All kinds of gods, tribal, Hindu and even the unknown ones, are sought to be propitiated so that none of the supernatural forces may go against the individual performing the ceremony. Let us conclude this section by drawing the attention to some of the salient points made here in relation to our theme. There is no doubt from the perusal of the ethnographnic material that Bhilalas practice a parochialised form of Hinduism. Their religion is considerably affected by the two distinct but inter-related models of religious beliefs and practice among the town's Hindu population, namely, non-vegetarian Rajput model and the vegetarian Brahmnic and Vaish model. Both these models find their natural place in the Bhilala's system of relations with the vegetable and the animal aspects of Man-Nature relationship.

X

A close study of the family life of Bhilalas reveals many

features which clearly link them to the Hindus as one of the sub-cultures of the Hindu culture of North India. The concepts of family deity, ritual complex of ancestor worship. Besides the concept of patriliny, the concepts of clan exogamy and *jati* endogamy found in most of the Northern Hindu cultures are also found among Bhilalas. It is true that the occurrence of these structural features is quite widespread even in tribals outside Hinduism. Yet the cultural terms in which these are expressed clearly indicate the link between these tribal communities and the Hindus. There are, however, certain culture elements which reveal differences with the dominant Hindu family system. The Bhilalas, like many *Shudra* and untouchable castes of the plains, practice the institutions of "bride wealth" and junior levirate (*Debar Bata*). Unlike the Northern Hindu castes they marry at a relatively late age. Girls are married off only when they are fully grown up. Unlike the caste-Hindus the girl's side has an upper hand over the boy's side. It is interesting to record that some of the tribal *jatis* aspiring to upgrade their *jati* status try to reform themselves on the pattern of the dominant Hindu model. A Rawat Meena of Banswara told me: "We were a Rajput *jati*, we came down in status when our elders began practicing *Devar Bata* (junior levirate)."

At a superficial level the Bhilalas of Alirajpur accept the stereotypes of Rajput male-dominated forms of family organisation but the actual role of the father is very different. For example, he may not make major decisions for the family without consulting his wife and adult sons. As a general practice, fathers consult sons even about projected agricultural activity. Again, the tribal men accept the ideal sexual behaviour of women in which chastity and virginity before marriage are highly rated qualities, but in actual fact a great deal of informal understanding is shown for the girls who are unable to maintain their virginity before marriage. The importance of women in the family's authority structure is also very much minimised according to the verbally accepted Rajput view of life. This contrasts with the very crucial importance of the wife in informal decision-making. The tribal mode of inter-personal relations in the intimate circle

of the family and the Rajput model have, however, come to get interwoven with each other in daily life. Let us take, for example, the role sets of husband-wife and father-son to see how the contradictory tendencies of the Rajput norms and the Adivasi norms are in fact resolved.

As mentioned elsewhere, generally the head of the household does not take a decision which involves the use of labour of the adult members of the household without consulting, first of all, his wife and then his adult sons. But the discussions regarding the utility or feasibility of the work will not take place in the presence of outsiders. Similarly, though the wife often plays a leading role in making decisions affecting the family, it is always the father who declares the decision as his own. In general gatherings of the village, the women tend to retreat into *Ghar* or the inner room of the house, they also show a marked circumspection in their dealings with their men in the presence of village elders, but otherwise they are bold and definite in pronouncing their opinions. In the social situations in which the family is acting in the presence of the wider society, husband-wife, father-son relations take on the characteristics of the formalised Rajput model. But when acting within its own exclusive field, the mode of behaviour takes on a more truely tribal colour.

It may be remembered that there are always differences of behaviour in the broader societal contexts and the narrower familial contexts. Whereas it is more common to find people acting in terms of exogenous stereotypes in extra familial contexts it usually requires a higher level of acculturation to adopt these models of higher culture for the internal familial contexts as well. Although there is a formal acceptance of many of the Rajput stereotypes by the tribals, the stereotypes do not thoroughly influence all aspects of tribal life. Even in some of the formal situations there are certain features which seem to go against the Rajput model, for example, during marriages men and women dance together. It is interesting to note that where a degree of sanskritisation takes place, such innocuous pleasures as men and women dancing together seem to disappear and in its stead

Kirtans, that is, community religious songs and *Satya Narayan Katha* (the devotional story of Satya Narayan) takes its place. Among the Guru Harnam Singh's *Bhagats* this change is noticeable.

Notes and References :

1. R. Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture*, Chicago, 1955.
2. J. Steward, *op. cit.* (1955), pp. 46-47.
3. For a short description of the Rajput dress, see in McKim Marriott (ed.) *op. cit.* (1955).
4. Cf. G. S. Aurora, "Towards a Sociology of Foods and Nutrition", *Social Action*, Vol. 19 (2), Delhi, 1969.
5. McKim Mariott, "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization in Marriott (ed.), *op. cit.* (1955) and M. N. Srinivas, *op. cit.* (1952).
6. In some of the simpler societies one does come across religious specialists, such as shamans and priests, however, even in such societies these are usually additional roles to the basic productive roles. Cf. W. J. Goode, *Religion Among the Primitive*, Free Press, Glencoe, 1951.

CHAPTER X

Conclusion

Since people construct their social life with the elements of nature that encompass them, a description of the geography of the region and the cycles of seasons was a necessary first step to an understanding of the rythm of social life of the people. Some of the basic adjustments the tribal has to make with nature, such as, topography, condition of the soil and the availability of water, flora and fauna, affect the nature of his economic behaviour. Because any single source of income is insufficient to support his meagre cultural existence, the Adivasi has to depend for his sustenance on a variety of natural resources such as, land, trees, livestock and forest produce. Furthermore he supplements his income by working as a labourer on government projects. However, by and large, agricluture is his central interest.

Over a period of time some Adivasi communities have tended to become better farmers than others. These communities remain superior farmers even when they live near forests, as compared to other communities. Bhilalas and Patelias, are invariably better farmers than the Bhils and Mankars. The Bhils earn a larger portion of their income from selling wood and other forest produce than the Bhilalas. Adivasis have gradually adjusted the plough culture to their own soil conditions. For example, the Adivasi plough is much lighter than the plough used by the Malwa peasants. Often the Adivasi uses a multi-pronged rake in place of a plough. Again the combination of legumes with cereal crops and the complex cropping patterns show that the Bhilalas have taken agriculture quite seriously and systematically improved it.

As the peasants' agricultural traits have been incorporated in their total cultural system, the ritual paraphernalia of the

Hindu peasant cultures has followed. But these ritual traits have been altered to fit into the particular socio-structural features of the Adivasi society. For example, many of the ritual ceremonies have functional links with their economy. *Navai*, *Duda Puja*, *Devan Puja*, were obviously in line with the Adivasi farmers' relationship with the elements of nature. At the same time the form in which the ceremonies are held has obvious imprint of the Hindu civilization. For example, in every ritual where a profane object or person comes into contact with a sacred person or thing a ritual of sacrilisation of the profane object or person is performed. In this ritual, rice, safron powder, milk, water and a burning lamp are used. Some forms of these rituals are called *Arati*, the term used for such rituals by the Hindus all over Northern India. Other Hindu idioms of culture, such as *Oshtha* (pollution), the concept of *jati* (caste) are also incorporated by the tribals in their cultural system from the wider Hindu culture. But when we view the application of these important culture idioms by the Adivasis we realise that the concepts are far less rigorously applied as compared to the caste Hindus. For example, the ritual distance between the Bhilalas, Bhils and Balais is measured, among other indicators, by the physical distance that the lower and higher must keep between each other. The Bhils must sit at a distance of at least two arms' length and the Balais at a distance of four arms' length from the Bhilalas. But the rule is not strictly followed even in the ritual contexts. A Bhil friend of the Bhilala groom was seen by us to sit right next to him during one phase of marriage ceremony. Again, it is not unusual to see the Bhil, Bhilala and Balai men and women dancing together arm in arm, there being no expression of untouchability there. Yet, on other occasions, the distance between the Balais and Bhilalas is maintained, but these occasions are not necessarily ritual. For example, in a village gathering to be addressed by the VLW, the Balais sit at a distance from the Bhilalas. Also at another occasion, in a gathering at the Patel's house, Balais were observed to sit on the ground at a small distance from the Bhilalas.

The "caste concepts" express structural distance between tribal *jatis* but since the social differences between the *jatis* is

actually not too great, there cannot be too rigorous an application of the rituals of "caste-distance". This appears to be particularly true of the ritual relation between the two land-owning *jatis* — Bhils and Bhilalas — who act towards each other almost as equals; whereas the rituals of social relations between these land-owning *jati* and the Balais — who own very little land — do follow the "caste pattern" somewhat more rigorously. The Adivasi's image of caste rankings among the commercial castes is also much simpler than it is in reality. Normally the Hindu commercial castes are referred to by the general term *vanya* and in some contexts as *Baman vanya.* Occasionally some of the Adivasis may know the distinction between different Hindu castes, and we have heard of a few Bhilala families who refuse to eat off *Teli* (oil miller) hands but such highly sanskritised Adivasis are few.

II

None of the tribes and scheduled castes living in the region are culturally homogeneous communities. The most significant factor for variation in culture is the spacial distance. The spacial distance between primary communities tends to be reflected in the cultural distance. The spoken dialect changes every fifteen miles or so, though the general structure of the language remains the same over a much larger area. In Chapter II and again in Chapter III, we have described and discussed cultural variation; this variation is largely sub-regional (spacial). Within a sub-region most of the tribal *jatis* partake of the language and culture of the sub-region. However, certain cultural features are peculiar to specific tribal communities. Socio-cultural segments of each tribal community are inter-linked with each other by ties of kinship. But usually these ties tend to remain within the sub-region. There are also marginal members who can be culturally and structurally included in either of the neighbouring regionally defined segments. Despite this medley of cultural variety the tribal communities throughout the region, have many cultural and social structural features in common. Social structures of these communities may be described as patri-

lineal and patrilocal with sufficiently strong links with matri-kin. The local social system is nuclear family centred with an accent on self-sufficiency and autonomy of the nuclear family farm. Within the local community the extended families, or the minimal lineages are cohesive units.

III

Ethnographic studies of Indian tribes have often ignored the fact that even the relatively isolated tribals are usually a part and parcel of the regional socio-cultural systems. These tribal communities like the Gonds of Baster and various tribes of Nagaland have evolved autonomous and highly individual riches for themselves within the regional culture.[1] In the case of Alirajpur tribals, we are forcefully struck by the fact that the tribals have such significant relations with the non-tribal commercial and administrative centres that their social life cannot be fully grasped unless the role of these urban foci are also discussed. These urban centres are not only seats of economic and political power, but also profoundly affect the spread and density of inter-tribal linkages. Practically all the significant developments within the tribal social system can be traced to specific processes originating or passing through the urban centres.

IV

Since the Bhil country is too vast a region for closer ethnographic scrutiny, our strategy was to concentrate on a single tehsil within the region. Chapter III tries to suggest that Alirajpur could be considered a viable unit for study since it constituted a regional community with its own political history and its consciousness as a social region. In this chapter emphasis is placed on the unity of the region despite the varieties of tribal and non-tribal cultures that coexist within it. The role of the Rajput rulers of the erstwhile princedom of Alirajpur is emphasised. They not only provided their people with a central leadership, but also acted as repositories of regional traditions and acted as symbols of sentimental unity of their diverse people. As outsiders to the tribal system they became mediators and

judges in intra-tribal and inter-tribal disputes. With their superior military prowess and organisation they protected the people from the throes of internal discord and external aggression. They also acted as models for local leadership and culture. Through them many outside elements were introduced into the tribal society and the tribal leadership developed links across regional boundaries. The part played by the commercial elements is also brought out. The commercial elements integrate the tribal economy with the broader regional market economy. Through the commercial elements much of the surplus of the countryside is gathered and resources provided for a more complex urban culture at various centres. The commercial castes are also shown to be the principal factor in reducing the tribal economy to a marginal, nay, deficit level. The overall impression of the study is that the urban life has contributed disproportionately to the creation of the regional levels of community existence.

In Section II of the thesis, Bamanta village, serves us as a case to illustrate the details of the rural dimension of the regional life. Within the rural dimension too, we can discern various levels of community existence. The local levels extend from the hamlet and village to cultural sub-regions within Alirajpur. Strands of affinal and agnatic kinship relations extending over the sub-cultural regions within Alirajpur make these into affectively rich community levels. The linkage between kinship networks and regional levels is provided by the marketing centres. These marketing centres act as channels whereby kinship relations are periodically activated. In Section III of the work the regional level of analysis is given a diachronic dimension with the help of three "frontier" concepts, namely, the political (or administrative) frontier, the economic frontier and the cultural frontier.[2]

One of the earliest forces of change in this region was the political intrusion of the Rajput dynasties who brought in the concept of centralised political leadership. We saw that their rule did not completely alter the earlier tribal system based upon

clan autonomy but it did introduce additional foci of inter-tribal and inter-clan contact. We have also mentioned how Rajputs encouraged an increased penetration of commercial castes into the tribal hinterland which ultimately lead to the creation of a large number of commercial villages. These were somewhat different in the settlement pattern as well as function as compared to the tribal hamlets. Over a period of time the relation between the commercial-political centres and the tribal hinterland had settled down to a relatively stable rural-urban system in which a weak Rajput rule left the tribal society by and large to its own devices. By the end of the 19th century, British influence had introduced a fundamental change in the political system. Consequently, upon the extension of the administrative frontier the system of exploitation of the tribal hinterland underwent a radical change. Increasing centralisation and modernisation of the political machinery lead to the imposition of restriction on the freedom of the tribals to do shifting cultivation. It also caused an increased exploitation of the forests by the State. A consequence of these State acts was the conversion of the tribals into sedentary peasants. We have also considered it plausible that with the wider dispersion of clans and the emergence of Patels the position of the clan head weakened. With the reduction in family feuds there was a strengthening of the affinal links and relative weakening of agnatic links. Commercial centres as efficient communication channels probably furthered this tendency. We saw that the new system of relations as it emerged after relatively greater centralisation of the administrative networks was closely inter-twined with the commercial castes' relations with the tribals. The commercial castes helped the tribals with money for various purposes and also supplied them with the necessary informal links with the powers-that-be in the town. We mentioned how the social customs and needs of the tribals were the functional basis of the tribal's dependence on the commercial castes. To understand the economy of the tribals one must bring in the rural-urban system of relations.

Since independence new forces of change have been released among the tribals. Again these forces emanate from the

urban centres and largely work through the existing rural-urban networks. But they also create new chains of inter-relations within the system. Increasing commercialisation and politicisation of the tribals is seen going hand in hand with increased density of relations both within the tribal communities as well as between the tribal and the commercial castes. There are however signs of backlash in the process of tribal's integration in the emergent social structure. This is seen in the increased incidence of criminality as urbanisation brings the corrupt townsmen in contact with the tribal-robbers. To some extent, this situation hinders the progress of modernisation. Again politicisation is somewhat counter-balanced by the growth of parochial tendencies. There is some backlash apparent in another sphere as well. As the inputs of money grow through the developmental agencies a great deal of this wealth leaks down the traditional channels into the coffers of the *Sahukars*. At the same time inflation finds its way into the traditional exchanges, such as "bride price" and payments to the Bhangi-bands at marriages. Increased personal incomes of some have sharpened socio-economic differences and consequent tension within the tribal community. The tension is not expressed in the form of class-cleavage, as one would expect, but rather in terms of inter lineage and inter-personal conflict. It is possible that the local pathologic symptoms, such as robbery, theft and murder, are also a dysfunction of the social tension.

V

At this stage it would be appropriate to raise some questions regarding three related types of continuum concepts which have been variously suggested by a number of scholars to explain the social and cultural relation of the little communities within the great civilization. Redfield was the first anthropologist to introduce in this area of analysis, the concept of folk-urban continuum. Through this concept he sought to highlight the fact that the essential difference in the culture of the peripheral folk and the cultural elite in urban centres was not that between different genre but rather between different degrees of concen-

tration of cultural values of the civilization as a whole. It is from these cultural crucibles that changes originated and later on radiated to the little folk communities of the civilization.

Redfield's idea of the continuum seems to have stimulated a number of scholars of Indian communities of which Milton Singer's study of the City of Madras, Marriott's study of Kishan Garhi, and Sinha's study of Bhumij [3] are the ones that come to our mind. Marriott's study of the relation between the cultural complexes of a village society and the broader Hindu civilization suggested the binary concept of universalisation and parochialization. Marriott's concept has been an advance over Redfield's concept of folk-urban continuum. He has shown that the relation between a civilization's centre and its periphery is a dynamic process in which the periphery and the centre exchange culture traits and as a consequence get transformed over a period of time. With the help of this concept one can show not only the similarities between culture traits found in the little communities and centres of civilization, but also explain differences and gradual transformations in these traits. Together with the more specific concepts of Sanskritisation, westernisation and modernisation suggested by Srinivas, this concept facilitates the analysis of culture change at various levels in India. We can explain the existence of many of the Bhilala culture traits as parochialisation of Hindu traits. For example, the cult of the household goddess *Ghirsari* (from *Griheshwari*, Sanskrit), the celebration of *diwali*, *dussehara* and *holi* are in line with the Hindus of the plains. But these cults and customs have found a special tribal character among the Bhilalas. The deities invoked at many of these occasions are the local deities. Their propitiation, for exnmple, is not done by any specialised ritual caste but by the head of the household or the clan *pujara* (priest). The ceremonies are also much simpler and obviously symbolic as compared to the more complex Sanskritic rituals. The parochialisation is not only of Sanskritic traits but even western traits are often transformed to suit the tribal pattern. Safety pins are turned into garlands, plastic combs and mirrors adorn the turbans, bushshirts are converted by having them ornamentally patterned.

As long as we remain at the level of cultural processes the concepts noted above appear to be sufficiently good tools of explanation, but they do not succeed in explaining the structural aspect of the relation between tribal society and the Hindu society. F.G. Bailey[4] has synthesised the Durkheimien concepts mechanical and organic solidarities with the concept of continuum to give us a structural framework for considering the position of a tribe *vis-a-vis* the broader Hindu society. Bailey replaces the term "mechanical" by a more apt term "segmentary" to emphasise the essential structural characteristic of "tribe". As an ideal type the tribe is a homogeneous non-hierarchic society. It is internally divided into segments based on kinship. Each of these segments is associated, as a whole, with a certain defined territory. An organic society, on the other hand, is internally differentiated into hierarchically arranged strata with differential access to sources of political and economic power. "...we must see 'caste' and 'tribe' as opposite ends of a single line. Particular societies are to be located at different points along this line, some nearer to the segmentary tribal model, others close to the model of an organic caste society. In other words, of each society we ask the question: to what extent is this society organised on segmentary principles and to what extent is it organic? We do not ask disjunctively: is this a tribe or a caste?" (Bailey, 1960: 13–14).[5] Bailey finds that in considering a comparison of rural communities the crucial factor for differentiation is the proportion of the society having 'direct access to land'. "The larger is the proportion of a given society which has direct access to the land, the closer is that society to the tribal end of the continuum. Conversely, the larger is the proportion of people whose right to land is achieved through a dependent relationship, nearer the society comes to the caste pole". (Bailey, *ibid, 14*).[6]

Sinha found a certain difficulty in applying Bailey's model. He writes: "The *Kharia* and *Pahira* ethnic groups in Paragana Birbhum in the former district of Manbhum in Bihar...hold their homestead land as well as rights of hunting and collecting as dependents on other castes, and yet they have rather feeble social articulation with the rest of the Hindu society in the area. On

the other hand, there are larger groups in the area like the Bhumij and the Mahto who dominate the landholding and are intricately involved in socio-ritual interaction with the caste system of the region" (Sinha, 1965: 60).[7] There is a degree of arbitrariness in Bailey's definition of a tribe in terms of its relation to land. After all, there are many nomadic tribes who have segmentary social organisations. At the same time there are also many castes with "segmentary" types of social organisations (Jats, Gujjars, Ahirs of Northern India).[8] Although Bailey has been legitimately criticised for his specific definition of the tribe, his basic idea that castes and tribes should not be defined as this or that "disjunctively" but rather in terms of the wider system of relations in which they are placed, is correct. A community is rightly defined as a tribe when its internal organisation is segmentary. But if that very community exists within a system of other endogamous and hierarchically arranged communities it could also be viewed as a caste or *jati*. This is of course not to deny the fact that becoming a part of a caste-system would affect the internal social organisation of that community in such a way that it will become less "segmentary" and more "organic". Thus, logically, we could expect various tribes and castes at different levels of "segmentariness" or "organicness". If this view is accepted then tribes and castes cannot be considered as this or that irrespective of their broader social involvements.

Sinha suggested in 1958 a polarity between the "tribal" and the "Hindu peasant" levels of socio-cultural systems, when generalised as ideal types. The tribal level and the Hindu peasant level were defined in terms of a variety of empirically observed characteristics thus: "the peasant level included a number of emergent features like a surplus in economy, based on settled agriculture, social stratification, ethical religious and puritanical value system as distinguished from the essentially egalitarian and non-puritanical tribal level." (Sinha, 1965: 59).[9] The categories–tribe, peasant–when viewed as total socio-cultural systems, have certain difficulties of wider application since the same package of cultural features, even at that level of generality do not appear in all situations. The problem arises when one is

confronted with such cases as that of the Jaunsar Bawar who are "peasant" in as far as they are settled cultivators since time immemorial but do not display Hindu puritanism at all or the Rawat Meena of Peepal Khunt (Banswara, Rajasthan) who have become fairly puritanical and sanskritised largely owing to the "*Bhagat* movement" but their habitat is still more isolated than of the Bhil Meenas of Garhi Block in Rajasthan who are less puritanical. In 1965, Sinha, stimulated by Bailey, suggested besides the "tribe-peasant" continuum another "tribe-caste" continuum. I feel that there could be, in fact a large number of continuums based on different structural elements active within a society. Obviously, unless we are able to suggest some continuum of such a general nature that would encompass a large number of structural variations, we are likely to be accused of defining a whole in terms of partial comprehension of the parts.

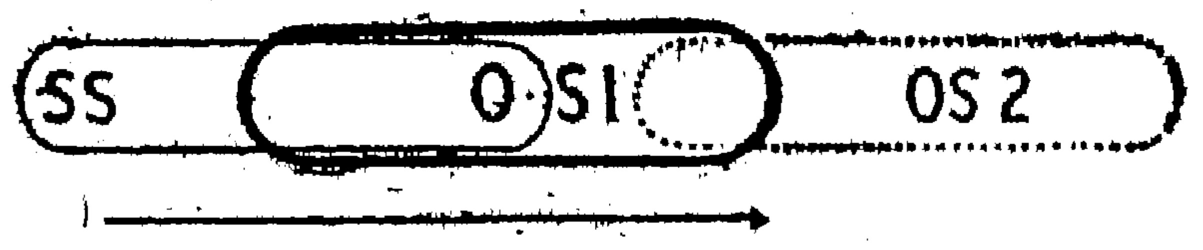
We may exemplify our contention by referring to the material from our study. The tribals in Alirajpur live in dispersed settlements and on the whole their lives are accented towards maximum possible self-sufficiency in economic affairs. But politically they are organised at two distinct though related levels, into clans and villages. In any conflicts touching their kinship relations the local segment of the clan, that is, the local lineage acts as a totality. To the extent that this system remains unaffected by the administrative system the clan system acts as a segmentary system.[10] Cross-cutting affinal ties and the fact that clans are dispersed over various villages provide elements which can act as mediators in case of serious inter-clan conflicts. Rules of clan exogamy and tribal endogamy unite each of the tribal communities (*jatis*) with a definite feeling of belongingness and a fairly marked sense of themselves as a moral community. Together with the clan system of organisation is the territorially organised political system. At the bottom of this system are the villages defined by the revenue authorities. Each Bhilala village has a Patel who is most often recruited from among the senior family of the locally dominant clan. As such in the person of the Patel the clan system and the administrative system are united at the local level. The territorially organised administrative

system has also a subordinate role, that of the village *Chowkidar* (guard). Invariably he belongs to the Balai caste. The local tradition maintains that the Balais were brought as a servant caste by the Rajputs from Nimar and given the task of guarding in Bhil and Bhilala villages and enjoined to assist locally appointed representatives of the Rajput authority—the Bhilala headmen (Patel) and Bhil headmen (Tadwis). The Balais duplicate roughly the same social organisational features within their own communities as the Bhilalas and the Bhils. In the local set-up, except for theoritical definition of tribal *jatis* as ritually higher or lower it is only the Balais and the Chamars who as occupational and ritual specialists introduce an element of the caste system at the local level. If we shift our attention from the local level and observe economic interaction between the tribals and the non-tribals in the urban contexts we find again a combination of caste and class principles. A rather weak form of traditionality appears in the relations between the tribal *Asamis* (clients) and their non-tribal *Sahukars* (bankers).

There are many specialist castes, such as *Kumhars* (potters) *Lohars* (Ironsmiths), *Sunars* (goldsmiths), *Khatis* (carpenters) and various *jatis* of *vanyas* (traders), but only rarely are the relations between these castes as also between them and the tribals based on the Jajmani system. By and large it is the rules of the open market which prevail. In Alirajpur town besides many castes there are also many occupational groups that are outside the caste system. The most significant of these is tailoring of Adivasi clothes and poorer people of all *jatis* engage in this. Nearly each occupation has its own trade association; besides, the castes have their associations as well. We see that in the urban context, though there are well-bounded *jatis* the caste system is peripheral in organising inter-relation between these *jatis qua jatis*. This of course does not mean that *jati*-conciousness (*jati pratha*) is not significant in political or community contexts. But *jati*-consciousness is a relative term. It does not necessarily imply a full-fledged caste system with its rules of inter-caste relations. Besides *jati*, "class" too is important in determining social relations.

For example, there is occasionally a conflict of interests between the big traders and the small traders. During the summer of 1965, the bigger licensed traders of Mahuwa came into conflict with the smaller ones; under these conditions the "smaller" and the "bigger" traders did act as conscious interest groups. There is also a certain association between economic position and political affliation of a person, *Chhote Log* (the lower castes) supporting the socialists and *Bade Log* the Vaish and Brahmin castes) the right and centre parties. Let us present the relation between tribe, catse and class in the form of a paradigm.

(S.S.) segmentary tystem :	tribes : *jati.*
($O.S_1$) Organic system (1):	Inter-caste society characterised by Jajmani relations and functional specialisation.
($O.S_2$.) Organic system (2):	Inter-class society characterised by free market and competitive relations.



Visually we may represent the situation in Alirajpur as : The arrow represents historical direction. Overlapping the segmentary system (S.S.) is the organic system ($O.S^1$) and organic system ($O.S^2$). The segmentary aspects are seen both in tribal and the urban *jatis*. At the same time, Sanskritisation of tribals is producing some features of caste-system among them. The market economy, however, transcends caste-system and with the introduction of democratic institutions and increased monetisation, the life of the traders as well as the tribals has begun to move towards the organic system ($O.S^2$).

In summing up, we note that in this sub-region we have tribes who are also rural castes, urban castes with somewhat

weaker *jati Pratha* (or tribal-consciousness), modern occupations with their associations and social classes. Each of these specific types of groups emerges in empirical situations in response to the interplay of individual interests. The concept of continuum from segmentary to organic types of societies serves as a theoretical tool to locate the stage of evolution of a society from one structural form to the other. To assess the position of a society on the continuum we ask ourselves the question: "What is the relative frequency of the empirical situations in which class, caste or ethnic (i.e. tribal) factors are dominant"? When we view the society of Alirajpur, from a historical perspective, with this "tool" we discern that the tribal sub-society as well as the town's sub-society are increasingly shedding their "segmentary" aspects and taking on the "organic" (used in Durkheimien sense) aspeets. This trend is easily isolable in the economic and political spheres, but only barely recognisable in the kinship and religious spheres.

VII

We have just discussed a number of concepts which assume continuity of culture or structure between the rural or folk-end of a society and the urban or "high culture" end. A logical difficulty stalks this mode of analysis. If folk-and urban-ends are part of a single continuum when does one leave one end and enter the other ? The question can also be phrased thus: "Is there discontinuity between the urban culture and the rural or folk culture as well as continuity"? One of the answers to a question like this can be: "The discontinuity between the rural and the urban is merely conceptual and not empirical. There are different grades of ruralised urban centres and urbanised rural centres". This answer has one glaring defect. It can be empirically proved, by selected marshalling of data, that rural and urban societies are not only culturally discontinuous but also antithetical to each other. It seems that it is always possible to empirically prove both a continuity and a discontinuity between urban and rural aspects of a culture. How is one to solve this problem ?

The contradiction between the continuity and discontinuity in the tribal-rural-Hindu-urban cultures can be explained only if we distinguish between various levels of culture. At the level of the individual culture traits the existence of continuity appears. It is in the nature of the individual trait to get easily diffused from one group to another; primarily because an individual trait is seen as an innocuous item with little implication for the social organisation. Up to a point, the groups can incorporate the external culture traits without their structure or pattern of life undergoing any radical change. In fact, in the very process of incorporating the external elements the content of existing relations is enriched. "When an Adivasi young man purchased a bush-shirt he wanted the tailor to decorate it with flower patterns with a variety of coloured thread. Obviously as he wore it, it was his own age set among the tribal youth with whom he was going to dance, that was uppermost in his mind. The bush-shirt with the flower patterns went with his other decorative paraphernalia". (From the field notes.) It is at the level of the idioms of culture that the distinction between the Adivasi and the non-Adivasi becomes sharp. The idioms of culture in their turn reflect the relatively stable aspects of the structure of social relations. It is, therefore, the configuration of elements and the "meaning content" of these configurations that separates one category or group from another and this is what we ought to look for also when studying both continuities as well as discontinuties between inter-related sub-cultures.

VIII

Now the question arises, what are the cultural processes associated with the movement of a society from segmentary structural forms to organic structural forms? The degree of "organicness" of a society is indicated by the extent to which it is open to cultural influences from outside and prepared to allow a higher degree of functional specialisation within itself. Redfield attributed crucial importance to orthogenic cities as the centres from which culture traits of the great civilizations radiated to little communities in the rural hinterland. The concept of Sanskriti-

sation[11] developed by Srinivas, has been rightly seen as the application of the general ideas of cultural diffusion to specifically Indian conditions. However, Sanskritisation is much more than that; it highlights the importance of the caste, of ritual, political and economic elites, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and the Vashyas, as the carriers, elaborators, localisers and transformers of the great Hindu-sanskritic cultural traditions. Srinivas was able to explain with the use of the concept the manner in which Sanskritic traits were used as symbols of boundary maintenance by the structurally higher groups and as indicators of social mobility by upward-mobile groups. Sanskritisation was thus seen as a structural as well as a cultural process.

As a culture idiom Sanskritisation has particular relevance to the process of inclusion of the peripheral tribal communities within the Hindu social structure as castes. Sanskritisation has thus been an indicator of attaining a relatively higher "organic" level by the tribal communities. Alirajpur tribal society has been on the threshold of this stage of social change for at least the last three centuries. The surprising feature of this society is that despite the long drawn contact of the tribal society with the Sanskritising elements — Rajputs, *vanyas*, Brahmins — it did not become a caste-Hindu society like that of the Gond region of Chhindwara (Central India). Obviously mere contact, and even political subservience, are not sufficient grounds for change in the direction of a caste-society, there are economic pre-requisities also. Occupational specialisation implies considerable surpluses in the hands of the farmers who may be able to afford the upkeep of ritual and artisan specialist castes. Our discussion suggests that the tribal economy is, on the whole, very tenuously balanced, whatever "little surplus" (beyond the mere subsistence level of living) the tribal is able to create from his highly varied sources are appropriated by the commercial castes. The transformation of a tribal rural society from the segmentary stage to the stage of partially organic caste society normally accompanies the migration of specialist castes to the villages. This has not taken place in the tribal region simply because the artisan and ritual specialist castes have not found the tribals a sufficiently

attractive economic proposition. We have therefore a situation in this area where the Sanskritic ideology has percolated into the tribal culture to a considerable extent, because of long drawn association between the tribals and the Hindus. But because Sanskritisation has not accompanied a penetration of Hindu castes into their social fabric the tribal society has remained structurally at a lower "organic" level.

Notes and References :

1. I know of very few published studies of Indian tribal peoples who have gone into any details of relationships between the tribal cultures and their Hindu neighbours. This is despite the fact that Srinivas and Bose, among others, recognised the fact of this deep relationship quite earlier on.

   Cf. M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India, op. cit.*

   Cf. N. K. Bose, "Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption", (1947). Reprinted in N. K. Bose, *Culture and Society in India*, Asia, 1967.

   Cf. S. Sinha, "Social Organisation of Dussehra Festival in Jagdalpur", *Anthropological Survey of India*, 1961.

2. The concepts economic and administrative frontier are suggested by F. G. Bailey (1958) and (1960). The concept of "The Cultural Frontier" was thrown up for discussion by Professor Srinivas in one of the post-graduate seminars in the Department of Sociology Delhi (1967). Nevertheless I take full responsibility for the particular sense in which this concept is used in the earlier chapters.

3. See Durkheim, *Division of Labour*, English translation by G. Simpson, Free Press, 1933, for the concepts "mechanical and organic solidarities". The concept "segmentary society", which is substantially similar to "organic solidarity" was used by Durkheim in his *Rules of Sociological Method*, English translation by G. E. G. Catlin, Free Press, 1938.

4. Bailey, *op. cit.* (1960).

5. *Ibid.*

6. Sinha, *op. cit.* (1965).

7. Cf. B. R. Chauhan, *A Rajasthan Village*, Vir Publishing House, 1967. Chapter 2. Also see O. Lewis, *Village Life in Northern India*, Chicago, 1958.

8. Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

9. Cf, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, 1949.

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TAILPIECE

This study concentrated attention on the rural system, even though its theoretical purport was to show the interaction between the rural and the urban systems within the framework of a single rural-urban system. I have in my possession a great deal of unprocessed and unused field data on the town of Alirajpur. At a later date I hope to write a study of the town and correct this imbalance.

I have followed the general tradition of sociological studies to desist from highlighting the social problems of the tribal people. If they feature in some chapters, they are there because of their place in the social life of the tribals. Probably, I should have suggested some ways of tackling these problems. But the problems of debt-slavery, tribals indebtedness amounting to rank exploitation, officials' lack of empathy, lack of supervision over village level workers and teachers, are too well known but need to be investigated in their own right. It would be unjustifiably ostentatious on my part to spew out programmes to tackle these problems. I, therefore, beg forgiveness for not making any suggestion except one that emerges from this study. None of the problems mentioned above can be understood as exclusive problems of the tribal communities. These are the problems of the regional community, and in evolving a strategy to tackle them, the whole of the rural-urban regional system must be taken into account. For example, you cannot remove indebtedness of the tribal until and unless the old channels of commercial interchange are replaced by new ones.

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